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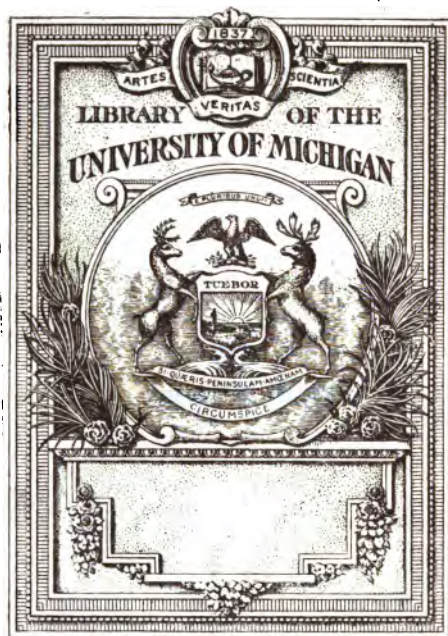
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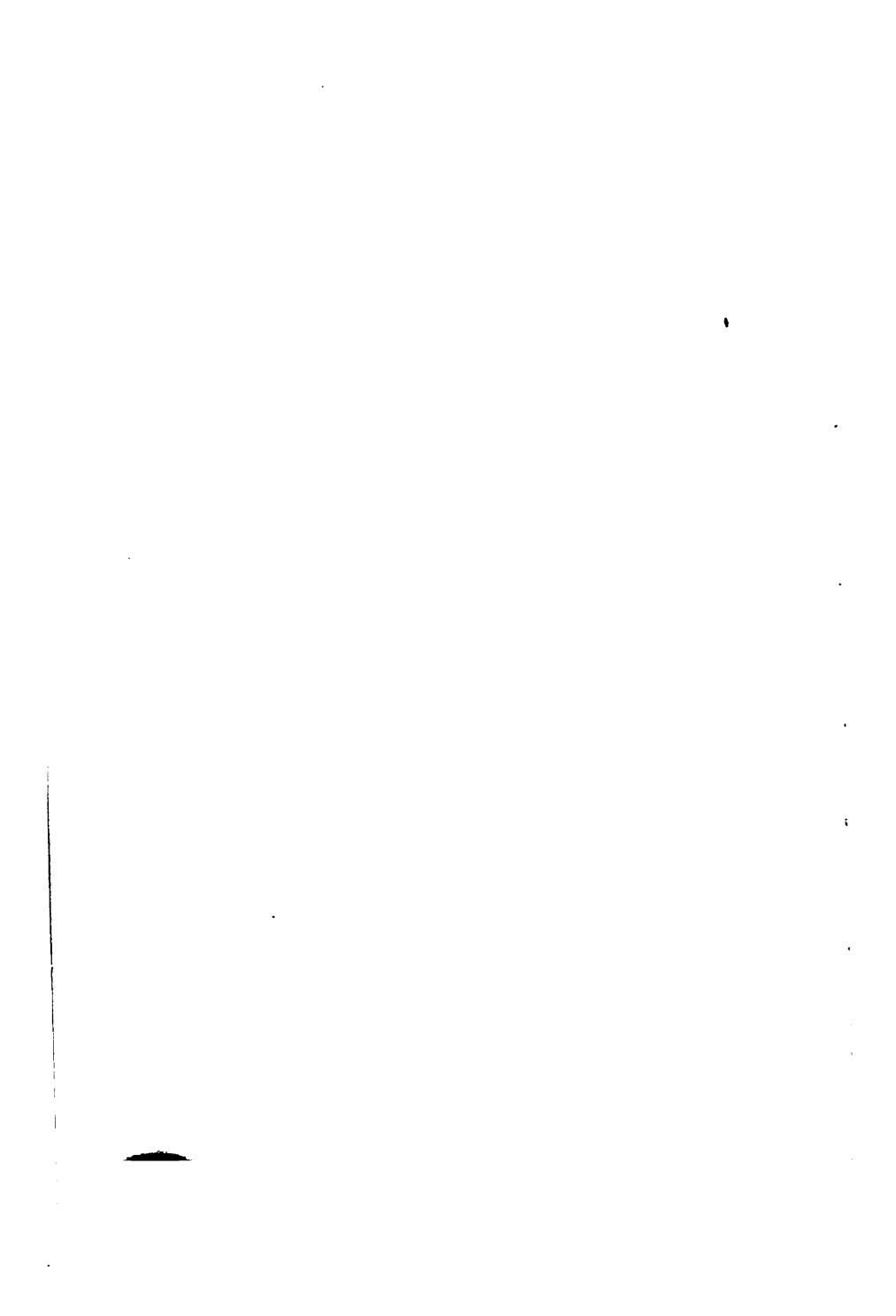
THE HOMEBUILDERS

by

Karl Edwin Harriman

author of "*Ann Arbor Tales*."

Philadelphia, George W.
Jacobs and Company. MCMIII



The Homebuilders



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To My Friend,
Henry P. Hetherington

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THE HOMEBUILDERS

The Homebuilders

I

BETWEEN the ages of sixteen and nineteen, to Henry Broszcki, orphan, a day meant this : Two meals eaten in the respectable boarding-house of his aunt, Mrs. Sientek, which the thrifty woman managed as a sort of annex to her husband's saloon on Division Street ; a luncheon consisting of sausage, black bread, and cold tea, eaten from an imitation-leather box in the moulding-room of the Stove Works; and ten leaden hours during which he wheeled loads of fine, flour-like sand in a stout barrow from one end of this room to the other, at the beck and call of big-mustached men who pattered about the finished moulds with little spoons. But at nineteen a day came to mean much more, for he met Julia Fernowicz then.

Julia Fernowicz had always worked, she said. Before she was ten, she served her father by bringing his beer in a stone pitcher from the corner saloon. At thirteen she "kept house" while her mother went out washing. One day her father

was injured at the dock where he worked, and he was brought home in a clanging wagon, dead. Julia, thereafter, remembered him best as he had looked that day. After the funeral, she lied about her age to the inspector and was given work in the Towne Cigar Factory. And, so, a day had now come to mean to her a dreary period during which she sat at a table, pulling the stems off tobacco leaves, staining her fingers in the process, and dreaming wake-dreams; while an older girl, perched on a high stool in the middle of the room, read aloud from an exciting novel. During these hours Julia was not a personality. She was "13-3;" the third stripper at the thirteenth table. She was a little hidden wheel in a big machine, and was related to the complete mechanism somewhat as the minute but necessary speck of paste at the point of a cigar is related to the smoke.

Outside the factory she lived as dreary a life with her mother, who, since her husband's death, had "taken in washing," thereby raising herself one peg in the social scale above the women who might "go *out* washing." So, in a way, the positions occupied by Henry and Julia in the scheme of society were equal, in that both were negative.

He met her for the first time at a dance given by a club in Polonia Hall one hot August night. On

that occasion he appeared resplendent in striped cottonade trousers, a black cutaway coat, which he wore buttoned, clerically, despite the heat, and a red necktie dotted with green. Julia wore a characterless brown dress, the sombreness of which was relieved somewhat by the bows of pink ribbon at her throat and in her hair. John Gerbanski named them to each other.

Standing before the girl, as she sat alone at the end of the Hall, his feet planted firmly and his arms hanging stiffly at his sides, Henry bowed jerkily as Julia looked up at him and grinned. The psychological moment thus passing without catastrophe, the rest was not difficult.

When the hot musicians in the gallery at the other end of the room began to play, Henry swung Julia out upon the floor. They danced earnestly, laboriously, and at the end he led her back to her chair, mopping his hot face with his red-bordered cotton handkerchief. He sat beside her in silence until the musicians struck up the next number, when he turned to her and asked seriously :

“Would yeh like a beer?”

She nodded and they went down-stairs. Here, over their mugs, each learned much of the other.

“Where d’ yeh work?” Henry asked, sucking the foam from his upper lip.

"Towne's."

"Oh, do yeh?"

"Uh-huh."

Julia rested her elbows on the table and, poising the mug at her lips, smiled dreamily across the board at her companion. Julia was pretty when she smiled that way. Henry became confused; his fishy blue eyes assumed an unwonted brilliancy and he shuffled his feet.

"C'n I go home wi' yeh?" he asked bluntly.

She laughed lightly. "Yeh don't know whereabouts I live," she said.

"I d' care."

"Don't yeh, sure?" she inquired coyly, draining her mug and setting it back on the table.

"Nah, I d' care," he repeated, adding explosively:

"Where d'yeh live, anyhow?"

"Way out on Banfield by St. Julien."

"Say, that's a long ways, ain't it? I live on Reland. But I d' care; I'll go anyway."

"Aw right."

Henry rattled his mug violently on the table.

Julia extended a protesting hand. "I d' want another," she said.

"Aw, come on; what's th' matter? have another."

"Oh, aw right then," and she settled back com-

fortably in her chair. A noiseless, gliding, smirking waiter filled their mugs.

Henry glanced about the room; then leaning across the table and lowering his voice, he said, "What yeh goin' t' do Sat'day night?"

"I d' know; nothing, I guess; go down town. mebbe," she replied.

"Le's go over t' th' Island."

"I'd jes' 's soon."

"Aw right; I'll meet yeh in front th' City Hall at half-past seven Sat'day night."

"Aw right. Come on; let's go back up now; ain't it gittin' late?"

Two hours later they stood at the gate in front of Julia's home. As she turned in, he caught her and tried to kiss her, but she jerked herself away, and, wheeling upon him, made a wry face and called softly, "Smarty!"

"Aw, that's aw right," he muttered, adding, "Don' yeh fergit Sat'day night—half-past seven."

As he walked on, looking neither to the right nor to the left nor before him, consciously, there was in his heart a confidence, born of experience, a certainty that she would "keep the date."

In the cigar factory the next day the hours did not drag as they frequently had before, and two or three times Julia caught herself humming softly a

barrel-organ air. At the Stove Works, Henry whistled as he wheeled the loads of fine, flour-like sand from one end of the moulding-room to the other, at the beck and call of big-mustached men who pottered about the finished moulds with little spoons.

The next Saturday night lived long in the memory of Henry Broszki as a night of scarlet thoughts.

II

As the days grew into weeks, Mrs. Sientek began to notice a change in the deportment of her nephew. Once he had seemed satisfied to sit all evening in his uncle's saloon, playing dominoes, or reading a greasy copy of the evening paper; but now each evening after supper, he had taken to washing his face and hands, brushing his hair,—which he had cut also from time to time—and arraying himself in his tight cutaway coat and cottonade trousers. Mrs. Sientek became suspicious. Not that she feared; she was merely curious.

One hot night in September she induced her husband to accompany her to the Island, where a kindly city government had provided music for that evening. Mrs. Sientek loved music. Indeed, it was because Gus Sientek had played the violin a

little as a youth that she had married him. Now, with him in her wake, she wriggled through the crowd to the first row of benches immediately in front of the bandstand. She cast her eyes along the bench, but there was not a vacant place. The flambeaux cast a sickly yellow light upon the faces of the crowd. Suddenly Mrs. Sientek started and clutched her husband's arm.

"Look!" she whispered hoarsely. Sientek squinted. There at the end of the row, beside a girl in a white dress, to whom he turned now and then, sat Henry.

"Well, what of it?" Sientek grumbled.

"Well—oh—nothin'—only I thought so," was his wife's indefinite reply.

Just then the band blared, and forthwith Mrs. Sientek forgot everything but the music, the time of which was quick and to her taste. When it was over, she cast her eye along the bench again, but Henry and the girl had disappeared.

The next day Mrs. Sientek joked awkwardly with her nephew about the girl in the white dress. It amused her to see that he was considerably annoyed, and she went further.

"Well, are you going to marry her? you going to marry her?" she inquired, a twinkle in her little black eyes.

"Yes, I am!" he growled, spitefully.

Mrs. Sientek laughed outright at his discomfiture.

"Where'll you keep her?" she goaded him.

"You can't bring her here; you haven't any house," she said with mock severity.

"You'll see; you'll all see," he exclaimed angrily.

"I'll—I'll——"

"What?"

"I'll get one." Snatching up his brown, imitation-leather lunch-box, he flounced out of the room, leaving his aunt to chuckle to herself.

At dinner, when she told Sientek what Henry had said, all her husband did was to mutter, as he speared a third potato, "Well, what of it; eh, what of it?" His interest was quite passive and his wife despaired of arousing it, so they finished the meal in silence.

III

Thus far, Henry's courtship of Julia had proceeded without opposition from any quarter. Indeed it was almost without incident. After her resistance on the night of their first meeting, Julia never again resented her lover's ardent protestations of affection, and within a week, the indulgence had become mutual. She told him all about her work in the factory, where the hours seemed endless, and

showed him the yellow-brown stains on her forefingers and thumbs. In return he exhibited his own calloused palms with the thick, raw-hide-like welts across the roots of the fingers. This sympathy, which was quite satisfying to each of them, constituted the single note of poetry in their romance.

By and by the winds from across the Lake grew cold, the leaves colored, and the Island boats ceased running. Once a fortnight during the winter Henry took Julia to a dance of this or that social club. Usually he met her on the street, but twice he called for her at her home. He did not encounter her mother, however, on either of these occasions, for Julia was watching for him at the window and appeared at the gate the moment he came in sight at the corner down the street, where a sputtering electric lamp swung. Nor was it at the house that he bade her his boisterous good-nights, but always in the shadow of the lumber pile in the "yard" below.

Thus far no word of marriage had passed between them. But one night in March of that new year, he said to her quite suddenly, after a period of silence during which they had leaned against the lumber-pile:

"Le's git married."

It was an open, straightforward suggestion, and

Julia met it fairly. She did not cast down her eyes, nor yet blush; she did not tap the walk coyly with the toe of her coarse boot. She turned to him simply and asked:

"D' yeh thirk y' wanta?"

"Sure," he replied, with a little impatient note in his voice. "What'd I say it fer?"

"Well," she chanced slowly, "I'll tell ma, an' see what she says."

"Oh, what's th' use tellin' her anythin' 'bout it?" he objected.

He had never seen this mother; he knew of her existence only at second hand, and thus far he had not considered her as one likely to exert any influence upon a condition or state induced by an action of his. To him, she was real enough but intangible.

"Well, I oughta tell her," Julia replied defensively.

"Oh, aw right, I d'care," he returned indifferently. Then stepping out into the middle of the walk, he repeated: "I d'care; go on, tell 'er."

"What do yeh think about it yerself?" he asked, as they reached the gate. Only once before had he come so far with her.

"I d'know—hardly," she replied, coquettishly, after a moment. Then she asked frankly: "D' yeh

think yeh c'n afford it? It takes lots o' money. Have yeh saved any?"

"Sure I have; what yeh think I bin workin' fer? six years almost; you bet I saved."

"What fer?" She looked up at once, and smiled at the absurdity of her question.

"Oh, I d'know," he answered. "Couldn't help it, I guess."

"Thought you'd git married some day?" she inquired with a certain archness.

"I d'know," he floundered. "Never thought much 'bout it till las' August."

"Yeh don't own a lot anywheres, do yeh, Henry?" she asked earnestly.

"No," he replied. "I don't now, but I c'n git one, easy."

"Don't yeh be so sure; they cost a good deal o' money; a house don't cost so much, but a lot costs a heap out here, ma says."

"How much?"

"Oh, I heard ma say th' other day they was a lot on Thurber Street for three hundred dollars."

"Is they?" eagerly.

"Ma says so," assuringly.

"Would yeh if I had a lot somewheres?" he asked quickly.

Julia hesitated.

"An' a house?" he added, persuasively.

She hesitated another instant, then replied :

"Yes, if yeh had a house'n lot, I would,—I guess you're gittin' enough."

"An' yeh wouldn't if I didn't have no house er lot?" The matter was quite ripe. There were, however, mental angles that it were well to measure.

"What 'u'd be th' use?" was her guarded reply.

"Oh, I dunno," he muttered. He kicked doubtfully at the gate-post. Looking up, suddenly, he ventured:

"Say, if I had a house'n lot t'morrer mornin', would yeh t'morrer afternoon?"

"Uh-huh." She nodded gaily. It was like a game in which she saw herself the winner.

He slapped her arm. "You'll see!" he exclaimed. "You'll jes' see; mebbe not t'morrer, but some day 'fore long."

"Aw right," she called after him from the narrow porch, "I will; an' I'll tell ma, anyway."

"I d'care," he called back over his shoulder as he walked away. They understood each other now.

"Go on if yeh wanta; I d'care."

IV

He reviewed the experiences of the five years

that he had worked. Their epitome was the fact that in the bank to his eternal credit, were the three hundred and fifty-two dollars he had saved. Now, a lot must be purchased—somewhere—and upon it must be erected a house. In the moulding-room the next day Henry learned much that was cheering from a fellow wheeler who had married during the winter.

“Git yer lot on contrack,” the latter advised, patronizingly. “I did. Ye’ll only haf t’ pay twenty dollars down; ’n’ ye’ll own it in a lil’ while.” He put a sort of swagger into his speech.

That evening, as they left the works together, the wheeler explained the contract system to Henry, as fully as he understood it. He also gave him the name and office address of the agent with whom he had dealt. And that night Henry obtained from Julia a laughing assurance that when he could show her a lot of his own with a house on it, she would marry him.

“I tol’ ma,” she said. “She don’t care; she said she don’t care—if you don’t git drunk, ever. You don’t, do yeh, Henry?” The little wistful note in her voice was quite unusual.

“I ain’t ever been drunk but once in my life,” was the prompt reply. “That was an accident, on th’ St. Aloysius picnic at th’ Island.” She

gave his arm a little pinch, expressive of her faith.

For the distance of half a block thereafter neither spoke; then Henry said:

"Say, if I git one to-morrer, will yeh tell th' priest Sunday?"

"Soon's that?" she replied, looking up at him.

"Sure," he exclaimed; "what's th' use waitin'?"

"They ain't any—much; only I don' want everybody t' think we're goin' t' git married, then us not do it."

"But we will; you jes' see; will yeh, on Sunday?"

After a moment she replied: "Yes—I guess so—I'll tell ma—but," she added, quickly, "I ain't seen the lot."

"Yeh ain't a goin' to see it either," he replied with awkward playfulness. "It'll be a surprise; you jes' got t' take my word fer it. We c'n git married at your house, can't we?" He was very eager, it seemed to her; suspiciously eager, perhaps.

"Uh-huh, but weddin's cost a lot," she ventured.

"Oh, I got money," he flaunted. "Your mother c'n cook th' things 'n' my Uncle Gus Sientek 'll furnish th' beer. We want a good one——"

So it came to pass that the priest was properly in-

formed, and afterward Henry and Julia went for a walk. She gleaned from his manner that he had something to tell her and a little fear possessed her.

"Say," he exclaimed, as they were passing the house of the Little Sisters of the Poor, "I got a lot."

She stopped and stared at him.

"You ain't!" she exclaimed, and if there was a note of joy in her voice, his ears were deaf to it.

Grinning, he unbuttoned his coat and from an inner pocket drew out a long white envelope with the name of a real estate broker in the upper left hand corner. As they walked on, they read the contract together; that is, as much of it as their knowledge of the written language permitted. He explained wisely certain points that she did not at first quite understand. She was all gaiety after that and much against his will, took him home with her, "to tell her mother," as she said.

For the first time he encountered Mrs. Fernowicz. He could have drawn an imaginary portrait of her with only his aunt in mind. She squinted at him quizzically, as he sat on the edge of the carpet-covered sofa in the front room.

"Well," she said, "so he's got that lot on Leland Street, heh? Well," she added, "it ain't possible t' live on just a lot; yeh got t' have a house."

Henry looked down at the carpet.

"But he's goin' t' git one," Julia explained.

"I'm goin' t' git one," Henry echoed from the edge of the sofa.

"Well, yeh ain't got it yet," Mrs. Fernowicz said, and then subsided into silence.

As he walked home, Henry realized more keenly than he had that the longest step was yet to be taken. A house there must be, decidedly. He could not build one. That would be too expensive. It must be found already built and moved upon his lot, bodily, as it were. In the crowded district occupied by his people, he knew such houses were scarce, if, indeed, they were to be had at all. One must be found, however. Perhaps his aunt could help him, he thought. But upon further reflection he put the idea away from him as impracticable.

How Mrs. Sientek heard definitely of the "engagement" Henry could not imagine, but he became the butt of much boisterous, ungentle joking on his aunt's part.

He had not taken her into his confidence, so, by way of revenge for this slight, she made fun of him until blushing and grumbling, he left the room and went into the saloon. Sientek was behind his bar drawing a pitcher of beer, and Henry told him of the investment he had made. They climbed the

bar stairs to the latter's room and, by the light of the little lamp, Sientek examined the contract, following the written lines with a stubby forefinger that was cracked and checkered with black lines on the tip.

"It's all right," he decided at last. "Now where yeh goin' t' git a house?"

Henry could not say. Sientek did not know. But, nevertheless, he assured his wife in the room below, as he filled a thick glass from the stone pitcher, "That boy's a taisy; he's all right."

"But he ain't got any house," protested Mrs. Sientek.

"Well, what of it!" her husband exclaimed; "he'll git one."

And as it happened, it was Mrs. Sientek herself that placed her nephew in the way of securing the abode he sought. One morning, three days later, there was a shooting affray in Thurber Street. Mrs. Sientek saw the bleeding man carried out of the little saloon in which the shooting occurred, and placed in an ambulance. She likewise saw his assailant led away by two policemen, past his own house, from the windows of which three children glimpsed him and came running to the gate. And that evening she secured copies of all the afternoon papers that were peddled in the district. These

papers, when she had stumbled through their accounts of the assassination, she left in the saloon. Henry found them there. In the advertising columns of the Republican sheet, which was the "organ" of the local government, and which he seldom saw, his eye encountered an advertisement that caused him to spread the paper out upon the table and bend over it eagerly. It was to the effect that on Monday, April fifth,—Easter Monday, he calculated—there would be offered for sale five houses on property purchased by the city for the opening of Orleans Street. Then followed a description of the houses. Three of them were opposite the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, four blocks from the vacant lot on Leland Street. They would be sold on the premises, to the highest bidder.

Henry seized his cap, tore the advertisement from the paper, and rushed from the saloon, to the great wonder of his uncle. He ran all the way to Orleans Street.

There stood the houses, quite as though they were waiting for him. All were of wood, a story and a half in height, small, compact, without foundation, but with little porches at the front and sides. One house had been painted within the year and was still quite bright. Its fence was new and the sidewalk in front was solid. The advertisement

had said that fences and sidewalks were to be sold with the houses. Satisfied immeasurably, joyful and keenly happy, Henry Broszki slept brokenly that night, and dreamed that he owned a great brick home on Jefferson Avenue, the back yard of which was alive with chickens. The next day he wheeled more barrows of sand than ever before in his life.

V

"Well," grunted Mrs. Sientek at the breakfast table, "what you do?"

Although it was Easter Monday, and, accordingly, a holiday, Mrs. Sientek was surprised to observe that her nephew was wearing his Sunday suit of black cassimere, and a white shirt, the collar of which set uncomfortably beneath his chin; for, being unused to the linen of fashion, he had neglected to turn down the corners of the collar, and they therefore presented two points of spear-like sharpness that dug into the flesh tantalizingly with every attempt that he made to chew.

At his aunt's question, he shrugged his shoulders, but no reply was forthcoming.

"Picnic, yes?" she persisted.

"Nah," he grumbled.

"Well, can't yeh let him alone?" Sientek snapped reprovingly.

Henry met his uncle's little eyes thankfully.

How glad he would be in the deliverance from his aunt's nagging that was soon to be his. Since that first morning, weeks ago, she had allowed no opportunity of teasing him to escape her.

Suddenly, now, in the midst of a thick silence, she put down her knife and exploded:

"Ah, you buy the house to-day, eh, yes?"

Henry pushed back his chair and left the table straightway. "Shut up," he flung over his shoulder, as he stamped heavily up the stairs to his little room. Between his jocular aunt and his collar, his nerves were as nearly on edge as they had ever been. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and presently Mrs. Sientek heard the back door close.

"He can't make fun," she complained, whereat Sientek replied, "Let him alone." However, she was not satisfied to have seen the last of Henry on so momentous a day.

When the dishes were washed and wiped and piled together on one end of the table, and the sink was scrubbed and the dish-cloth rinsed out, she hung her apron on a nail by the door, and, tying on her best bonnet, sallied forth on the trail of her nephew, whose courtship, it may here be said, had, during all its course, afforded her more amusement than

anything else that had come into her life, which at best was dreary enough.

Early as it was, and a holiday into the bargain, the streets were not deserted. Little groups of gossipers stood at various gates, their heads close together, their hands complacently clasped beneath their aprons, while apart, and voiceless in their discussions, slouched their men folk. Late the previous night it had rained for an hour and the cedar pavement was covered with a thick, shiny, black ooze, which the earliest barefoot boy toed delightedly and the women slipped upon. Down the street a way a fish-cart was drawn up at the curb and a score of women, clutching gray shawls at their throats, pressed close to the wheels to inspect the monger's wares. The odor of the fish filled the street. The women's voices mingled in a confused clamor, above which now and then rose the shrill pipe of a child upon whose feet some one had trodden in her effort to get closer to the wagon. The monger did a thriving business for five minutes, and then the circle broke magically, and its component parts ran awkwardly hither and thither, clutching their reeking purchases. Up the street two children were setting out with their cart on a wood-gathering tour of the new residential district along the avenue which crossed the street five blocks farther on. A

pale Felician sister moved noiselessly and swiftly by, the hem of her brown serge robe just touching the pavement as she walked, her hands clasped low before her, the rope girdle of her order swaying with her stride. A child lay prone upon the curb, and with a piece of glass tubing found in the alley behind the Free Hospital, blew bubbles in the slime of the gutter.

Mrs. Sientek stopped here and there at open gates along her way for a morning word with her friends. Mrs. Stefansky had died in the night, some one told her, and Stefansky was at the Central Station for having been caught peddling without a license.

"Maybe they'll let him out for mass."

"Ah, maybe. Who can tell? It is not a free country."

"What will be done with the children?"

"That's the question."

"A good Sister has them now, but they cannot always live at the Convent."

As Mrs. Sientek passed the Stefansky home, Father Durowsky came out and she waited for him at the gate.

"Yes, she's dead," he said, and passed on.

Mrs. Sientek shrugged her shoulders.

So it is, every day; some one dies and the priest

comes out of the house, speaks a word, and is gone.

And perhaps that instant there came to Mrs. Sientek, fat, complacent, satisfied, a little touch of sentiment, a kindly feeling for many whose names were familiar to her; perhaps, even for Henry. As it was, she walked on at a more rapid pace.

She turned up Houston Street, past the huge church, built by a great priest who had even threatened to tell his bishop to go about his business, on one occasion, and to whom his thirty thousand parishioners would have clung even in the face of a wrathful Rome. Mrs. Sientek had been one of these, and now, when she passed the great church, she inclined her head and mumbled a prayer for the repose of the great priest's soul.

When she reached Orleans Street she turned to the left. Midway down the block the thoroughfare was crowded with an eager, jostling throng, each member of which seemed striving to secure for himself a place more favorably located to hear the voice of the fat man with the brown mustache and Irish eyes who sat between two companions on the little porch of a white house in the middle of the block.

Mrs. Sientek had attended many house auctions in her time. Indeed, she could very well recall one,

in the course of which Adam Rowski had been shot for overbidding, in a spirit of fun, a serious purchaser of six yards of plank sidewalk. And there, too, was the great auction of five years before, when one hundred and twenty houses had been knocked down to the highest bidder. Did not Lemky make himself rich out of that auction? Did he not buy every one of the houses and market them on the spot at a handsome profit? Ah, Lemky was a wise man in his day and generation; yet he had not robbed his customers, and no doubt there was not one of them who would refuse, now, to shake his hand.

Mrs. Sientek hovered at the rim of the crowd, craning this way and that to catch sight of Henry, but he was not to be seen. Presently an opportunity offered and she squeezed close to the fence in front of the porch where sat the man with the Irish eyes and his friends.

"Go on, Billy," urged one of the latter; "start her goin'."

Thereupon Billy stood up and, hooking his thumbs in the arm-holes of his plaid waistcoat, shouted:

"Shut up out there, you gazabes, and git your money ready, 'cause we're goin' to clean up this bunch of chicken-coops in less'n a minute."

A burst of laughter greeted this sally, and one of

two young girls who stood directly behind Mrs. Sientek was heard by her to observe, with a sigh: "Oh, Mary, ain't he lovely!"

"How much am I offered fer this house?" inquired the humorous Billy, in a brassy voice, raising one fat hand like a priest, as though he would smite to earth whomsoever should have the effrontery to name a price less than the amount he had in mind.

"The one you're standin' on?" called a voice from the heart of the crowd.

"Yep, this here house, right here. And it all goes; roof, walls, front porch, back porch, shed, chicken-coop, sidewalk, fence, and the paint that's on it."

"Fife tollars!" some one cried, gutturally.

The auctioneer's lower jaw relaxed, and stooping, with his freckled, hairy hands on his knees, he gazed into the faces of the crowd.

"Five dollars!" he yelled. "That wouldn't buy the gate! This here house is worth five hundred dollars if ——"

He got no further.

A great jeer drowned his voice and he was compelled to join in the laughter against him.

"All right then, you cheap skates. You don't know a house when you see it. Five, I'm offered—five, five—who'll make it ten? Ten, ten; five

comin' ten. Eh, what's that? Man with the whiskers makes it ten! Ten, ten, ten; five comin', five. Five, five; ten; who'll make it fifteen? Come along now! I ain't out here for my health! Eh? Oh, twenty; that's the way to talk! Twenty, twenty; five comin' five; who'll make it twenty-five? Five, five—twenty I'm offered. Say, that couldn't buy the chicken-coop! Twenty, comin' five; five, five; who'll make it twenty-five? That's right. Now who'll make it thirty-five? Twenty-five; make it ten, make it ten, make it ten! Thirty-five I'm offered by the man over there with the kid! Make it forty-five; make it forty; make it forty; make it forty-five! Are you ALL done? Come along now! Say, you're the cheapest lot o' skates I ever laid me eyes on. Come along with a ten, ten, ten! Make it forty-five! Are you all done? Thirty-five, onct! Thirty-five, twict! Thirty-five, three times. Sold to the guy over there with the pink whiskers and the kid fer thirty-five dollars. Come along up here, Sourkroutski, and separate!"

The crowd parted to form an aisle down which the purchaser of the first house meekly came, his eyes upon the ground.

Jeers were flung at him to which, however, he paid no attention. He halted at the porch, and, thrusting one hand into a pocket of his im-

mense breeches, drew out a great wad of paper money.

"Whew!" ejaculated the humorous Billy, "look at th' cabbage."

Thereupon he asked the man's name and when he heard it, lifted both hands despairingly. His companion with the sale-sheet looked up weakly.

"Spell it!" screamed the auctioneer.

The man shook his head.

Thereupon the auctioneer asked if there was any one in the crowd who could spell the man's name.

"I kin."

He looked down at the child clinging to the man's hand.

"You kin? Well, if you kin, yer a peach! How does it go?"

The little boy drew a long breath.

"M-o-r-r-i-s L-e-s-c-w-i-c-z-s-k-i."

"Is that all?" shouted the auctioneer. The lad nodded. The crowd laughed and the man with the sale-sheet grinned.

"All right, partner," the loquacious Billy observed; "unroll that bunch of lettuce you got in your mit and count out thirty-five bucks."

Three bills were taken from the purchaser's wad and the rest thrust back into his pocket.

"Now come down to the City Hall to-morrow,

understand, and we'll finish the sale. Understand?" The man nodded. "And mind you got t' git the house off this lot inside o' five days. Understand that?"

Another nod, and, turning, the man led the child back along the path that was formed for him again by the crowd. Encountering several friends at the rear, he engaged in a conversation with them that was so loud and so fully illustrated by threatening gestures that one who did not understand might well have believed a violent assault to be imminent.

Now that the sale was well on, Mrs. Sientek squirmed back through the crowd to resume her search for Henry. Stooping, she peeped through wherever an aperture was momentarily presented, but she could see nothing of him. As the crowd moved on to the next house, she followed, darting here and there and ever craning. Once she thought that she caught a glimpse of the brilliancy of a familiar necktie, but Henry was not its wearer. If she could not see him, she thought, she could at least hear him. So she ceased her search and decided to wait until she should hear his voice, bidding. She wondered if this were the house he had decided to buy, if the Fates proved favorable. Apparently it was not, for it had been run up to forty-eight dollars almost immediately without the sound of

Henry's voice once having been heard. She saw a fat man, to whose arm a young girl clung, go up to the porch and give the auctioneer several bills and five unopened pay-envelopes, the contents of which the auctioneer proceeded to count carefully.

The third house was by far the most attractive of them all. It had been recently painted. There was a little, low rail around the narrow porch and the house was a story and three-quarters in height. Surely if Henry had firmly decided to buy a house, this was such a one as he would select, Mrs. Sientek speculated.

"Ten dollars," came the cry at once.

Mrs. Sientek strained her ears.

"Fifteen dollars!"

It was Henry's voice!

Up, up, higher and higher, went the bidding.

"Forty-five dollars!"

That instant Mrs. Sientek, exhibiting far more agility than one would have thought she possessed, sprang into the air. She saw Henry. His face was very red. His opponent, a young man like himself, stood beside him. And even before her feet touched ground again Mrs. Sientek heard that young man shout:

"Fifty dollars!"

"Fifty-five!"

There sounded, quickly on the bid, a smart slap as when flesh is struck with the flat of the hand, followed by a cry, then a roar; and before Mrs. Sientek could get out of the way of her own accord, she was forcibly removed by the sudden expansion of the crowd.

That there was a fight in progress in the heart of the throng, she well understood, and it was not at all her intent to linger on the outskirts, thereby losing the opportunity of seeing it. So with great skill she wormed her way to the inner rim of the circle.

"Sixty," cried a voice just then.

"Ah, it's Henry," Mrs. Sientek screamed.

Henry it was, but eyes less keen than Mrs. Sientek's would never have recognized him. He was locked in the not affectionate embrace of the youth whom she had caught sight of a moment before and he it was who had called the last bid. Cursing, kicking, pummeling, they swayed from side to side. The strange youth withdrew his fist from Henry's mouth an instant and Henry had presence of mind enough to shout thickly,

"Sixty-five."

The crowd, eager for the fight, jumped about, clapped hands and yelled, but the auctioneer and his assistants on the porch of the little white house

cared not, so long as bids were forthcoming. So Billy continued his sing-song urging and presently had the satisfaction of hearing "Seventy," shrieked above the bobbing heads in front of him.

With an almost superhuman effort Henry's opponent, as the former cried his bid, flung his antagonist to the ground, face down, and sat upon him.

Mrs. Sientek would have lent a helping hand but fear held her back. She had all too often seen the results of feminine interference in masculine altercations. Besides, she was wearing her best bonnet; so she stood by, useless, quivering, and panting like an ice-crusher.

There was an instant of deathlike stillness and then —

"Seventy! Are yeh all done?" came the call of the auctioneer.

She saw that Henry had heard. She saw his body, prone in the ooze of the street, writhe and wriggle, but he could not right himself, and astride him, a grin of ineffable delight upon his countenance, sat his opponent, beating him between the shoulders.

"Seventy! Are yeh all done? Once. Twice."

Not till then did Mrs. Sientek realize the full meaning of the situation.

Her heart leaped into her throat.

She made a quick calculation. Seventy dollars! Would Henry have bid higher?

"Are you all done? The third and last time."

"Seventy-five!" shrieked Mrs. Sientek.

And if none other, she had the satisfaction of seeing the eyes of Henry's victorious assailant start from his head at the pipe of her voice.

He was too amazed to speak. The auctioneer was becoming tired.

"Sold to the last bidder for seventy-five dollars," he shouted.

At that the stranger leaped from astride the prostrate Henry and sped through the crowd, knocking aside all those who sought to bar his way.

"Henry, Henry, I got th' house for yeh," murmured Mrs. Sientek, stooping over the body at her feet. Dripping with mud, his face plastered, his hair tousled, and his lip bleeding, Henry rolled over and sat up.

His aunt gingerly assisted him to his feet and led him dumbly to the auctioneer.

"I got it for seventy-five," she said, beaming; "You pay th' man."

Although Henry, as yet, no more than half understood the meaning of it all, he gave his name and drew from his pocket all his savings.

"Git th' house off th' lot in five days," said the

auctioneer, mechanically. "Yeh look like th' River Front on a rainy Sunday! Git a shampoo, take a fall in th' drink and bury them clothes! And git th' house off this lot in five days; you understand?"

"T'-morrow," Henry managed to mumble, for his lip was swollen to thrice its normal size.

Mrs. Sientek led him away around the edge of the crowd. Chancing, as it did, that the auctioneer moved to the next house straightway, the throng's attention was again diverted, and no one cast a glance after the ill-matched couple as they moved down the street, Mrs. Sientek maintaining a discreet distance from her nephew, but every now and then darting an eye at him that twinkled in contemplation of his calamitous condition.

They entered the house by the back door, and Henry vanished, with not a thought of thanks for her who had been his salvation in an hour of dire distress.

"So it only cost you seventy-five," observed his uncle from behind the bar, as Henry, his face clean, appeared.

Henry nodded. "I'd 'a' paid a hundred," he said. "I'm goin' t' lay fer that guy. You'll see."

"Where you goin'?" Sientek called to him as he moved lamely toward the door.

"Down town t' git a new suit."

At supper his aunt sought to resume "making fun with him," and said:

"Well, you got the house, didn't you?"

"Aw, shut up, can't yeh," he snapped.

"Why don't you let him alone?" Sientek growled reprovingly.

And though Mrs. Sientek had nothing more to say during the meal, her beady eyes never ceased to twinkle.

So it was that the next day a mover drew up his apparatus in front of the little white house, and loading it upon the wagon, carried it away. To it, in the evening, Henry and Julia came, and they planned where they would dig the flower-bed, and set the chicken-coop; and Henry, after half an hour of measuring and considerable computation, discovered that there were quite two yards more fencing than was necessary, and they accounted themselves the richer by that amount.

As they walked away, they looked back over their shoulders. The house gleamed white in the electric light. Julia pressed Henry's arm and murmured:

"My, I think it's fine."

And Henry, straightening, replied with ill-assumed indifference:

"Oh, I guess it'll do fer a while."

"Now, we're goin' t' be married sure," Julia said.

VI

The early flowers in the narrow yards were blossoming and a few of the cherry trees were abloom.

Julia was up betimes and dressed before six o'clock, all in white, with a filmy veil that fell to the broad heels of her white cloth slippers.

Mrs. Fernowicz went about for two hours with her bonnet on, its long strings tucked in the neck of her sky-blue brilliantine bodice.

Paula Clatsky came at eight o'clock, and a moment later Mary Kernakowicz knocked at the door.

At nine o'clock Henry arrived, with John Klafsky and Peter Hefansky, his chosen groomsmen.

"Gad, yeh look fine," he said, beholding his bride in the glory of the veil and the wreath of imitation blossoms rented from the old costumer to whom a wedding among his people was a God-send.

John and Peter sidled over to Paula and Mary, to whom they whispered compliments, while Mrs. Fernowicz who, in the festivity, perhaps, saw herself a bride again, stood by with her hands clasped

complacently over her capacious stomach, and beamed radiantly upon them all. She, too, was glad in her heart, for had not Henry bought the house and lot, and did not the house await them now, beckon them, as it were, and call to them? And she smiled when she thought of her gift which she had seen safely installed in the front room late the afternoon before. It, too, awaited the homecoming. And such a glorious gift as it was. Mrs. Fernowicz spent all of two hours one evening in the instalment store selecting it from among a great and varied company of its fellows. It would be a surprise, surely, for neither Henry nor Julia knew; but they would see soon enough. What would they say? she speculated, happily. Pleased, of course, they would be, vastly; but what would they say?

Mrs. Fernowicz had other causes for satisfaction. For was not the beer in the kitchen; had not the band been engaged to blow and scrape dance-music, and had not Henry's uncle sent over a small cask of wine and enough glasses to serve every guest? Yes, even if every one in the street should come, which every one was rather more than likely to do. Small wonder, with these arrangements completed, with the great surprise waiting in the new house, and with the kitchen table already loaded with cooked meats, cakes, and apple pies—ten of them,

small wonder that Mrs. Fernowicz stood by during Henry's pleased inspection of his bride with her work-worn hands complacently clasped across her stomach and her square face wreathed in smiles. For she had done well.

"Well, you ready?" Henry asked.

"Sure," Julia affirmed.

They started for the church then, Henry and Julia walking ahead, he stiff and uncomfortable in his new "cutaway" of black cassimere, and striped trousers, creased fashionably and a bit flaring over the instep. But he was proud; proud with the pride of his people, and even the stiff lawn tie that he wore was a symbol of his pride. Julia's white-mitted hand rested never so lightly upon his arm and a naked wire protruding from her blossom wreath scratched his ear. Behind them, with barbaric dignity, walked Mrs. Fernowicz, and in her wake, Paula and Mary and Peter and John, the last two most uncomfortable, due to their clothes and to the thought that from behind each window-shade, dancing eyes peeped out at them and merry lips speculated how long it would be before they, side by side with Mary and Paula, would be walking at the head of such another little procession.

The church was more than half-filled. Every family in the block had there its representative; for

on this Day of Days—a Wedding Day—sand-barrows, trowels, and the coarse, stiff broom of the street cleaner, are forgotten to make a Polish holiday. A little buzz was raised as the wedding party entered and passed down the wide aisle to the pew at the very front, where sat Sientek, stiff and motionless beside his wife, resplendent in bows and furbelows of many colors. To the chancel, and within the rail, walked Henry and Julia, he staring straight ahead, his eyes fixed on the brilliant mosaic covering the portrait of St. Josophat, exhibited to the faithful with befitting lights and pomp on Christmas Day and Easter only. Julia had urged a smile as the party left the house and wore it still; but there was no smile in her eyes, rather, a great wonder.

A hush fell over the people. On a bush outside a tipped window a bird perched, caroling. Father Durowsky's voice sounded hollow in the great church. And then, almost before Henry Broszcki realized it, and before Julia Fernowicz could quite decide whether she had pinned the white bow on her left instep as well as on her right, her name was his and they were one flesh in the sight of God. Sonorously the priest voiced the last words. They turned and confronted their friends. It chanced that Henry's eyes encountered those of John Kernafsky just then and John grinned foolishly. Henry

grinned by way of reply. The march back was less funereal.

In the street had gathered a great throng, and as bride and groom came forth into the sunlight a great cheer went up.

“Good luck! Good luck!” they cried, and an old crone pushed through to the sidewalk’s edge and gave her blessing. On the steps behind stood Father Durowsky, beaming, nodding, to right and left at the salutations flung up at him. On a corner an Irish policeman stood, and as the procession passed, he called out a phrase of congratulation that he had learned from Kernafsky’s new bartender and for the past ten minutes had been saying over and over to himself for fear of twisting it. There were little groups on every door-step, and, as the procession passed on, aprons and shawls were waved, and wishes of good luck, much prosperity, and great happiness, were shouted. Old men moved a bit nearer the old women who sat beside them on the narrow porches, and young men covertly pressed the hands of young girls, the one expressing a little dream of their own wedding-day long, long ago; the other, another little dream of the day, near now, perhaps, when they would march in the van of another such procession as was passing them, between double ranks of *their* friends who would wish *them*

good luck, much prosperity, and great happiness.

Mrs. Fernowicz and Mrs. Sientek had waddled on ahead and when the procession reached the house, the door was flung open and those who had been invited to partake of the first bride-feast entered, stamping. The rest hung about the gate, with no uncomfortable feeling that a slight had been given them, for they well knew that presently the band would come blaring up the street, and they too would be called within to dance with the bride, to be plied with beer and Sientek's favored wine by the bridegroom, and to eat of the cake and cold meats, and be merry.

For such was the way it was done in the day of Stanislaus and such is the way it is done to-day.

VII

Either on the shelf in the dining-room beside the clock, propped against a white china dog with green eyes and a salmon-colored tail; or in the large, ornate, blue-plush, metal-cornered book with the word "Album" in script, cut from a strip of aluminum and riveted diagonally across the cover, you will find in every house on a score of streets that might be mentioned, a photograph. In each instance it will represent a young girl, all in white.

She sits stiffly on a low-backed wicker chair with her right forearm resting on a round-topped wooden table. From beneath the harsh ruffle of her starched skirt projects—nearly always—the pointed toe of a cheap, coarse boot. The toe may be of patent leather; usually it is not; or it may be—though instances of such are quite rare—of a lighter shade; sometimes it is white. Occasionally the girl wears wrist mitts, but always there are white cloth flowers in her hair. For she is a bride, proud of her brideship which she would proclaim to all the world.

Beside her, his head held rigid by the “rest,” the prongs of which may perhaps be noted as black knobs just above his ears, stands a young man. His hair, brushed wet, is curled like a coil of fine wire at the right of his brow, and always he wears black. The only relief to the sombreness of his costume is afforded by the V of shirt-bosom, the collar, and the little, stiff, ready-made, white-lawn tie. Regarding him, one is forced to ask why the groom-state should be symbolized by funereal black and the bride-state by celestial white? They always are. The groom, whose countenance would seem to proclaim how serious is life’s aspect to him, always stands on the bride’s left, in order, no doubt, that his strong and carefully retouched right

hand may rest heavily upon the shoulder of her who calls him husband.

Or these pictures may from time to time be seen, arranged in stiff rows, or tacked upon black velvet-covered boards fan shape, as one holds a hand of cards, in the street show-cases of certain photograph "studios." But whether they stare at the world from behind a sheet of dusty glass, or stand propped against the china dog on the clock shelf, or lie hidden in the blue-plush album, these pictures symbolize youth, the buoyant beginning of a race with the world in which the world has the handicap. For among the Paulines and Marys and Ladislaws and Stephens there is but one portrait made, and that upon the wedding day.

It was to obtain such a picture of themselves that Henry and Julia set out after a brief breaking of bread with the immediate wedding guests. Gaily they fared forth to the little place of Anton Merciwicz, whose tiny, bare, and dusty "studio" is over the tailor shop next the bakery on Gratiot Street. While on their way they meant to summon their other friends to the feast that would be spread on their return. Lightly in the bend of Henry's elbow lay Julia's hand and her face became all smiles as, half shyly, she called to her friends through open doors to come and make merry on

her wedding-day. Knowing that she would not fail them, they had anticipated her coming, and at her call trooped forth in their best array. Henry, too, bade his friends come, such of them as had planned to shun the mill or shop or factory for this one day.

At the "studio" Anton was awaiting them, for he too knew that they would come—was not his case down-stairs on the sidewalk filled with pictures of other new wives and new husbands?—and he greeted them gleefully, shaking their hands violently and wishing them much happiness. It was quite unnecessary for him to pose them. There was but one pose possible, under the circumstances, and, knowing it, they fell into it at once. Little, nervous, wild-eyed Anton hopped about like a bearded canary; into the dark room and out again, magically; under the cloth of the camera and out again; to one side to draw back a breadth of black shade from the skylight; and then, snapping his fingers and smiling, he called:

"It is all," and vanished again into the dark room, promising them the proofs in less than a week.

Dear little Anton! Many the times that he had promised proofs in less than a week, knowing the eagerness of the boy in black and the girl in white to see themselves side by side on one of his Paris

Panel "mounts." And always he had seemed to partake of the spirit of their joy and be glad with them when the pictures turned out "good."

They rode back—in a hack.

A cunning cabby, with the tint of the bog in his face, had seen them as he was driving down to his stand in front of the City Hall, and knowing something of the ways of those who dwell in the Northeast City, and scenting a dollar, had drawn up at the curb in front of Anton's stairway, where, lighting a short-stemmed pipe, he settled himself to wait.

Coming down the stairs it was Julia who first saw the hack and with unconscious cunning she clapped her mitts and cried:

"Oh, Henry, is it for us?"

At her exclamation Henry was smartly reminded of the custom of his people and his kind, which in the excitement of the day thus far he had quite forgotten. However, he did not confess, but thrust Julia inside and gave the driver the number quite as though the thing had been planned. Neither of them had ever ridden in a hack before. It may have been in fear that some accident might proceed from the strange experience, that Henry flung his arm around Julia's shoulders and kept it there all the way. And it may have been to reassure her

that he kissed her several times, though he failed an equal number owing to her success in playfully eluding him. They saw the smiles flash upon the faces of the people on the sidewalks who chanced to glimpse them as they rolled past; for all the world is happy with a bridegroom, even though its attention may be directed to him by a grinning, gesticulating cabby on the box of the hack in which he rides with his blue-eyed bride beside him.

At the end of the journey, Henry parted with his dollar quite cheerfully and as a matter of course.

The bridesmaids had spied them from the windows and came rushing out to meet them at the walk, where, attracted by the music from within, had gathered a regiment of little boys and girls that drew away with many nudges and chuckles to let them pass. Pushed, pulled, jostled this way and that, they gained the house which straightway rang with shouts of welcome.

Thereupon began two full days of celebration, days destined not to be forgotten in the coming years of two lives then young.

All afternoon the eating and drinking and dancing and courting proceeded. Some few there were who slept in their own homes from midnight to dawn, but the greater number continued the clamor unremittingly. Each hour, the policeman on the

beat, was called to the door for a glass of wine and a bite of food, and never so much as suggested an abatement of the noise. The musicians scraped and blew their souls into their instruments. Plied with cup after cup of cheering cinnamon wine, Gus Sientek became, in the little hours, the leader in the merry-making. In the cool of the early morning, his weary wife sought to gain a moment of rest on the narrow back porch. There Gus found her, and in the wealth of his bubbling cinnamon spirits, and despite her vigorous protests, dragged her within and danced with her, lifting her clear of the floor with every whirl.

Afterward he danced with Julia's mother whose own youth seemed to have come flooding back to her; for, as faster and faster the musicians scraped and blew, faster and faster she danced, until, completely fagged, she flung herself upon the floor and leaned against the wall, panting.

Though, as the hours lengthened, some few of the guests dragged their leaden feet away, all the next day the riot of joy continued.

In mid-afternoon was begun the game of breaking the plate, a rite as old as the early Kings, so old that its beginning is lost.

Julia seated herself in the centre of the floor, a plate in her lap. All the young men crowded in

front of her. A coin was flung, striking the plate with a clack. Another and another, yet the plate remained intact while Julia was richer by the value of the coins. Many a red-cheeked, dancing-eyed girl held her breath as a possible husband made ready to fling his coin, for he who should first break the plate would be the next to wed. When at last John Kernski shattered it into a dozen pieces with a dollar, Mary Merowicz heaved a great sigh, and who is there to say her heart did not leap at the thought that ere long there would be another such plate breaking in her mother's house, a block away, with herself the bride, privileged to retain all the coins that were flung. Realizing the significance of the incident, the company cast sheep's eyes at Mary and John as long as they remained.

Julia had danced with every young man of the party, and though from each she had, as was her right, exacted a money payment for the favor, even the wealth thus gained was not sufficient to resuscitate her drooping spirits.

As evening came on, the remaining guests likewise began to show signs of waning strength and in couples and threes departed, heavy-eyed and leaden-limbed, with farewell shouts of good and everlasting luck. The groomsmen long since had gone, as well as Julia's maids, and Mrs. Sientek,

too, and her husband, whose legs, toward the end, had seemed a bit unsteady, becoming more so as he moved down the street ten feet in advance of his dragging wife.

Finally only the musicians were left, and then, shortly, they, too, departed wearily, with a final volley of good-luck wishes directed at the limp Julia and the hiccoughing Henry.

VIII

It was the end.

Julia, standing by Henry's side at the narrow front window, sighed and drew her hand across her forehead. Her eyes were heavy from lack of sleep and she rested one hip slouchily. The house was still and they were alone in the room. Down the street they saw the last of the musicians, who had been loath to leave so long as meat and drink were forthcoming. Eaten and drunk they had to their fill at last and departed with boisterous good wishes and hearts as light as their steps were unsteady. There were three of them standing on the corner, now: the bass-horn man with his huge, misshapen instrument slung over his back in an oil-cloth bag; the clarinetist, with his singing pipe under one arm; and the cornet player whose horn bulged his capacious coat tail pocket comically.

The couple at the window watched as they linked arms and moved on unsteadily, swerving from side to side; for the cinnamon wedding wine is long in its exhilaration.

Henry was holding Julia's limp hand in his own, and now, as the musicians disappeared down the street, she looked up at him and the pale ghost of a smile flitted an instant in her eyes.

"Well," she said, wearily, "that's all"—and yawned behind her free hand.

"Yeuh," Henry muttered; then brightening he exclaimed, "But it was a good one, wasn't it? How much did yeh git out o' th' plate?"

"Three dollars an' sixty-five cents."

"Huh! Did yeh?"

"Yes."

"Pretty good."

She pressed his hand slightly.

Mrs. Fernowicz came upon them noiselessly, too tired to call.

"Phew!" she said, sinking limp upon a chair.

"Are you tired, ma?" Julia asked.

A nod.

"Shall I help you clean up?"

Mrs. Fernowicz shook her head weakly. "No," she said, "Mrs. Sientek's comin' back. You better go an' git some sleep."

"I ain't tired," Henry flaunted. "Are you?"

"Not very," Julia lied agreeably.

A few big drops of rain pattered on the window pane. For it to have rained twelve hours earlier would have been ominous, but now that the last guest had departed, it might rain as hard as the heavens chose.

"Git yer hat 'n' coat er we'll git wet," Henry warned.

Mrs. Fernowicz found her huge umbrella which, when opened, was as large as a tent.

"You'll see th' present," she said at the door, and there flickered momentarily in her little eyes some of their earlier flame.

"What is it?" Julia asked.

"You'll see."

On the narrow porch Henry raised the umbrella. Julia gathered up her limp skirts in one white-mitted hand and clutched her master's arm.

The rain was falling quite steadily now, rattling on the low roof and trilling against the window.

"Good-bye," they called from the gate.

"Good-bye," Mrs. Fernowicz responded, and shut the door.

Many little steel-blue puddles lay on the walk but they splashed through them heedlessly. Neither

spoke until they reached the corner above the house when Julia cried: "Let's run!"

Her white slippers had soaked up the water like sponges and her feet were very wet. Her white stockings at the ankles were begrimed and damp and she was miserably tired; yet it was not for this that she would hasten, but, rather because of the quickening of her heart as they approached the house. Here was the corner at which she would turn for years and years to come to reach the home that Henry had made for her and him. Something of her people's longing and their pride flared an instant in her heart. She sprang ahead, dragging Henry after her, despite his protestations. Slipping in a puddle on a loose board she nearly fell, but recovered herself quickly and ran on. She opened the gate in the white picket fence—their gate—for the first time. The tired look had mostly gone out of her face, and as they reached the door and Henry fumbled along the window-sill for the key—Sientek had said he would leave it there—she looked quite happy. The electric lamp swinging above the street at the corner hissed, sputtered, and burned steadily, throwing the house into glistening, white relief. The click of the lock thrilled her. She rushed into the tiny hall with a little cry.

The light of the street lamp shone through the

window and the room at the front was quite bright. Julia, without so much as a glance at its contents, or even at the ragged, lightning-like crack in the plaster, had hurried on to the kitchen.

She had, in a way, surmised the nature of Henry's gift to her. It was the usual gift of the new husband to the new wife—a stove. And now in the light of the match that her husband struck, she beheld it, smiling, winking at her across the corner of the kitchen. Before the match burned to Henry's fingers there was given her time to utter an exclamation of wondering delight; then she groped for the hard hand of him who had given her this first taste of the joy of life.

"It's a beauty," she said, and begged him to light another match. While it burned, she walked around the stove touching it here and there on its shiny parts, lovingly. The match went out. He heard her sigh across the darkness. Thus far he had been content to share her pleasure in his works, silently. But now, a little impatient, he called her back into the dining-room where stood the plain pine table that his uncle had contributed to the home making. This too the girl touched reverently, but not with the rapturous delight that the feel of the cold stove had occasioned.

"We both forgot a lamp, didn't we?" she said,

as, with a muttered imprecation, Henry flung down the stump of match and thrust his burned finger into his mouth.

"Never thought about it," he said.

But she told him it was all right, that the street lamp gave light enough for this one night and that maybe they could buy a lamp on the morrow. Her hand found his and they went back into the front room. There by the window stood the gift of the groomsmen and the bridesmaids, a red wooden rocking-chair, with decorative black stripes running up the posts and down the legs and ending in exceedingly ornate scrolls. With a little cry of delight, Julia ran to it and, seating herself, began to rock violently in the white light that streamed through the window. And as she did so, her mouth opened and her staring eyes became fixed upon an object standing beside the door.

"Look! Oh, look!" she managed to cry out, and Henry turned quickly.

It was Mrs. Fernowicz's gift,—an imitation mahogany pedestal supporting, in tinted plaster, the bust of an American Indian.

"Gawd!" exclaimed Henry, not profanely.

Slipping out of the chair, Julia advanced cautiously, as if she feared the bust, and stood in front of it, her eyes wide-open, her hands clasped before her.

"Oh, Henry!" she murmured, "ain't it beautiful! I never could 'a' guessed, could you?"

Henry shook his head.

She was loath to move from contemplation of the rare thing. It was as though all the joy she had ever known, all the joy she ever was to know, had been crowded into the period of her adoration. But at last she turned away, to learn what further wonders lay half-hidden in the darkness of the rooms above. Beyond the bed, bureau, and stand that she herself had bought, there was nothing there.

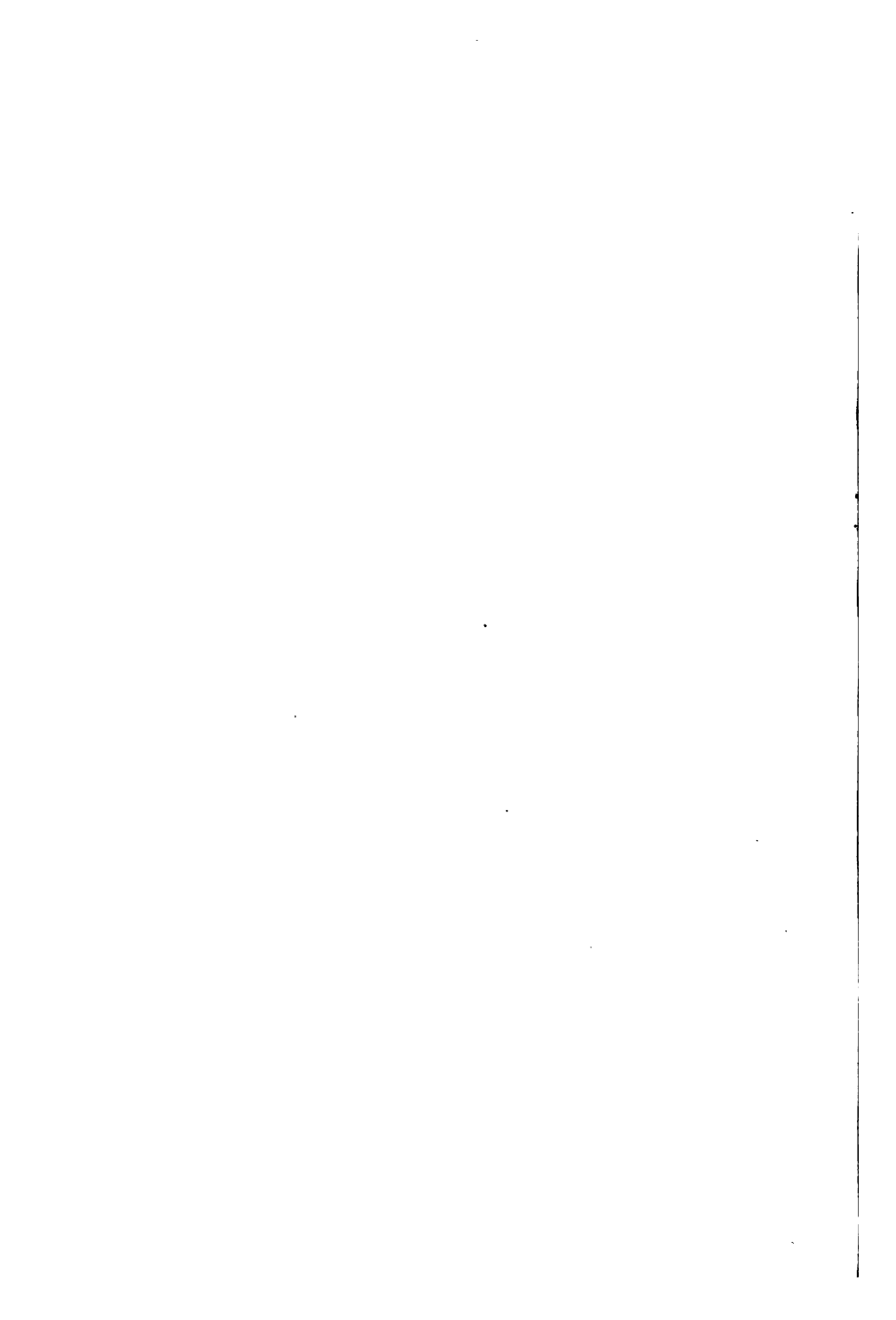
She went down-stairs again, Henry following, for all the pleasure in the gifts was not hers alone. His heart as well was big within him.

She went to the chair by the window and, seating herself, began to rock back and forth, her eyes upon her mother's gift, her hands clasped in her lap.

"Come over here," she said.

Henry sat beside her on the arm of the chair. The light of the street lamp, soft about them, erased the harshness from his face and toned hers. One of her hands found his upon his knee and clasped it warmly. He looked down smiling to meet her upturned eyes. An instant thus, in which all was forgotten save each other's presence; then, bending his head, he kissed her full upon the lips.

THE CASTING OF A STONE



The Casting of a Stone

I

THE air of the room was made misty white by the steam that rose from the wet pressing-cloths as the hot irons were run to and fro along them; and thick with the pungent odor of warm, moist woollen. The refraction of light through the steam made the room appear larger than it really was, and but dimly were to be discerned the two men at the further end who bent over the pressing-irons, now and then ceasing the rhythmic sway of their bodies to brush the steam from the wet cloths with little whisk-brooms.

Grabowsky had in his employ four men and a girl, the latter a vest finisher. The men were general tailors, qualified to put together any garment that Grabowsky's cutter in the front room of the shop might bring them. Lefsky, at the moment sitting cross-legged on the low table by the east window, huddled over a coat into which he was fitting a sleeve, was an old man. His shirt, open at the throat, disclosed a neck covered with a fell of

woolly white hair, and his pointed chin above was likewise rough. The blue veins upon his temples showed in striking contrast against the general palor of his skin.

One of the pressers came to the girl at the machine and bent over her.

"Say," he muttered, "goin' t' th' dance t'-night?"

"No, I can't; ma's sick."

"That so; I wish you was goin'. Me'n Gus's goin'."

The girl looked up and smiled. "Leo goin', too?" she asked.

The youth laughed outright. He glanced over his shoulder and, for a moment, regarded, grimacing, the man who sat cross-legged on the table in the further corner, at work upon a pair of trousers. He was young, maybe twenty-five, with a shock of yellow-white hair and a sallow complexion.

The young man looked down at the girl again. "Say, he'd be a beaut at a dance, wouldn't he?" he observed.

She glanced up reprovingly. "Don't make fun of him, Jake," she said.

"I wasn't makin' fun of him. What's the matter wi' you, anyway; you stuck on him?"

"Well, I guess not; but you boys hadn't oughta make fun of him. He can't help it; he's always

been that way. I should think you'd be used to him by this time."

"I wasn't makin' fun of him; you started it."

"You was, too. I just said that for a joke. You needn't'a'went on talkin' 'bout it."

"Who did?"

"Here, here, what you two jawin' 'bout?"

It was the old man who asked. The boy and the girl turned toward him.

"Nothin', Daddy," Julia replied.

Jake went back to the pressing-table, scowling, and Julia again bent over her work.

She was the only one in the shop who went home for the noonday meal. The men brought their luncheons in brown, imitation-leather boxes which they stowed away underneath the workbenches on entering the shop in the morning. In the corner Leo ate alone. Now and then he would glance out of the window at the end of his table, and once he bent so far forward as nearly to spill the contents of his box on the floor in his desire to learn whether the melted snow, dripping from the eaves, had filled the shallow alley gutter.

Cautious lest he might damage his needle finger, Daddy Lefsky peeled a weazened apple. As it was, the rag with which one of his fingers was bound was evidence of his having received a wound at an-

other time. The rag was dingy gray with the unnoticed, but ever-present, grime of the shop.

As they ate, Jake and Gus, with full mouths, talked of the approaching dance. The former told his friend what he had suggested to Julia: that it would be a joke if some one were to persuade Leo to go.

"Say," said Gus, when Jake had finished, "do you know what I think?"

Jake's mouth contained nearly half a fried-cake, but he managed to gurgle, "N', wha'?"

"He's stuck on her."

"Aw, g'wan."

"That's right; that's what I think," Gus insisted, with a wise wag of his head. "Jes' you watch him. He keeps lookin' at 'er, all th' time. Didn't you see how he watched her when she took th' pants?"

"Aw, 'tain't no sech thing! W'at's eatin' yeh? He stuck on her!" Jake experienced a strange, new feeling; one that he could neither identify nor describe.

"Say, can't you boys let him alone, an' quit talkin' 'bout him?" Daddy called across the room.

"Aw, g'wan," retorted Gus. "What you got to stick your oar inteh everythin' fer?"

"Well, don't yeh let him catch yeh talkin' 'bout him; an' talkin' jokes, 'bout him; that's all."

"Aw, who's talkin' jokes 'bout him?" Jake mocked.

Had he been alone in a dark room Leo could not have been more oblivious to his surroundings.

"'Sides, he can't hear nothin'," Gus added.

"That's all right, 'bout his hearin'," the old man insisted. "Mebbe like he can't *hear* what yeh say, but if he *sees* yeh talkin' 'bout him—better look out. You won't be able t' do any more soldierin' fer a week."

"Aw, g'wan."

"Well, you'll see," persisted Daddy. "You jus' listen t' what'n old man tells yeh. Yeh hadn't better bet deaf 'n' dumb folks don't know what's goin' on 'round 'em. Yeh better look out."

"Aw, shut up, can't yeh!"

Though they resented the old man's interference, Jake and Gus did, thereafter, during the noon-hour, observe a certain caution whenever they spoke of Leo. They understood full well what the probable result would be if the mute were to learn that they had talked lightly of him; for he was taller than either of them, and broader, and altogether stronger.

At the second clang of bells and shriek of whistles, Julia reëntered the shop. She hung her

hat and coat on a peg behind the door and seated herself at the machine, into the mechanism of which she proceeded to insert a filled shuttle.

The mutterings of Jake and Gus continued. Twice Daddy shot glances of annoyance in their direction, but their backs were toward him. In the whirr of her machine so close at hand, Julia could distinguish none of the sounds behind her. But just as she stopped the machine, she heard Jake say: "Go on; tell 'er."

She turned in her chair.

"What's that, Gus?" she asked.

"Don't pay no 'tenshun to 'em," Daddy advised.

"Aw, g'wan, can't yeh!" Jake flung at him.

"What was he sayin', Gus; come on, tell me."

Jake looked at Gus, who was grinning; then at Julia who was smiling upon them both.

"He wasn't sayin' anythin'," Gus answered.

"We was just talkin' 'bout th' dance. I was tellin' him I wisht you was goin'."

"Wha'd he say?"

Jake sniggered.

"Aw, come on, Gus, tell me; wha'd he say?"

"He said mebbe you would if Leo would."

He finished with a grunt, for Jake prodded him in the stomach. The girl's eyes flashed.

"Oh, he did, did he?" she snapped. "You'll

see! He's jus' as good as you two—if he can't talk! You jus' wait—you'll see."

Daddy smiled. He was vastly amused. For many weeks he had followed Jake's rough courting of Julia at a distance. That Julia herself had understood, he did not doubt; but now he came to the conclusion that the girl was determined to put a stop to it. He was surprised, therefore, that she said nothing further, but turned back to the machine. Toward five o'clock Jake came down to her chair, and leaning over her shoulder, mumbled: "Don't yeh s'pose yeh c'u'd go t'-night?"

She flashed her snapping black eyes up at him.

"'Course I s'pose I could go; an' what's more, I am goin'," she replied curtly.

Jake, momentarily dazed, observed meekly: "I thought yer mother was sick."

"She's better, 'n' I'm goin'."

"Goin' 'lone?" he asked.

"No, I ain't; but I c'n tell yeh *one* thing—I ain't goin' with *you*."

"Aw, come off, Julia; w'at I done? I didn't mean t' do nothin'."

"Who said yeh did?"

"Aw, that's a' right. But las' dance yeh tol' me yeh'd go t' this one wi' me," he pleaded.

She was very firm. "Well, what if I did?" she

snapped. "Guess I c'n change my mind if I wanta."

"Aw, come on, Julia; w'at's th' use a-gittin' mad?"

"Never you mind."

"Won't yeh go wi' me, Julia?"

"No, I won't. An' that settles it! Didn't I tell you I was goin' with somebody else?"

"Who is it?"

"Never you mind who 'tis. I'm goin' with him."

Realizing the futility of further coaxing, Jake went back to his table.

Daddy put by his nearly completed coat and sticking his needle into the little pin-cushion that dangled by a cord from a nail in the window-sash, slipped down to the floor.

"Good-night," he grunted at the door.

Gus and Jake prepared to stop work.

"Goin' up th' street, Julia?" Jake asked by way of making amends.

"No," she replied, without looking around.

Gus jerked his head toward Leo and grinned. Jake understood, and again experienced that strange, annoying thrill. Outside he said to Gus: "I wonder what he's waitin' fer."

"Waitin' fer her; can't yeh see nothin'?" Gus

explained, patronizingly. "Oh! he's stuck on her, though, ain't he?"

Jake felt very like the bull in the ring must feel when the matadore waves the scarlet flag. He thought of heroic things. What he said was: "He's a peach t' git stuck on *her*. Lot o' good it'll do him!"

Gus did not venture a reply.

"Say," Jake proceeded, loath to leave the subject, "who'd yeh s'pose she's goin' with, t'-night?"

"I d' know who she's goin' with; what d' *you* care who she's goin' with?"

That any youth of sound sense should be, in the slightest measure, interested in one particular girl, openly disgusted the impartial, versatile Gus.

"I don't care; w'at d' yeh s'pose I care? I was jus' wonderin', that's all," Jake replied.

"I guess yer stuck on 'er yerself!"

It was a well-shot arrow but it did not drop Jake.

He flouted the suggestion boisterously. "You make me tired!" he grumbled.

Back in the shop Julia had finished the vest and carried it into the store. It did not surprise her that Leo should continue work past the time for ceasing. It was usual for him to do so. When she returned he was buttoning his overcoat. Gathering her belongings she went toward him, at the same time

drawing on her coat. Standing directly in front of him, she asked: "Goin' to do anything to-night?"

He shook his head. She was hooking the front of her jacket now.

"Want to go to a dance?" she asked.

His lower jaw fell and his eyes became very large.

A peculiar, squeaky gurgle issued from his throat. Half dazed, and altogether mechanically, he touched the breast of her jacket, and then his own.

"Yes," she nodded. "You and me—to a dance."

Holding out his left arm he used it as a compass and inscribed a great circle, then nodded quickly. She gave him an answering nod.

"Yes," she said. "You want to know where—it's down t' Patter's—Patter's—you know where that is?"

He nodded. His eyes flashed and his breath came quick and short.

"All right," she said.

He plucked her by the sleeve and went through the motions of taking a watch from his pocket, and running one finger around the imagined dial.

"Oh, yes, yes; I know what you mean! You want to know the time! Yes, I understand. Eight o'clock."

He nodded jerkily, vastly pleased.

"D'yeh know where I live?" Unconsciously she raised her voice. She did not observe the sadness that came into his smile as he looked down and nodded, slowly.

"All right, then—my house—eight o'clock—I'll be watchin' out——"

The mute ran to the window and pressed his cheek against the pane to look after her. He saw her disappear into the street at the end of the alley. His hands trembled violently; he swallowed two or three times chokingly, shivered slightly, then smiled. Turning the collar of his overcoat close about his throat, he left the shop.

II

The air in Patter's Hall was thick and heavy. Some twenty-five couples were dancing. The young men wore their best clothes, awkwardly.

Jake and Gus had come to the dance together. Now they were standing near the hallway door, waiting. At each stamp upon the stairs without, Jake would lean forward in an attempt to note the newcomers at the ticket-office window.

"Aw, come on, Jake," urged the impatient Gus. "W'at's th' use? You'll see 'em soon's they come."

"Wait a minute, Gus; wait a minute; they'll be here in a minute," Jake replied.

Some one else was coming up the stairs. Jake craned his neck and made out a girl's profile at the ticket window.

"That's her!" he cried, excitedly. "Come on!"

He seized his friend by the arm and dragged him around to the other side of the flight of open stairs that led to the gallery, where a red-faced woman played waltzes and two-steps upon a cracked piano.

Gus slouched in the shadow. Jake peeped around the stairs. Julia and Leo entered the hall. His hair was plastered smooth upon his forehead, and he was radiant in a red necktie. Behind the stairs Jake waited patiently.

Shortly Julia came into plain view, a few steps ahead of her escort. At sight of him Jake started. With his mouth open, he gazed as though transfixed. Then, little by little, his teeth came together, and his lips straightened to a grin.

"Kin yeh see 'em?"

He turned to Gus.

"Say," he exclaimed, "who d' yeh s'pose is with her?"

"I d' know; who?" Gus came forward and peeped around the stairway.

"Well, wha' d' yeh think o' that!" he ejaculated.

The two boys stared at each other.

"Well, wha' d' yeh think o' that!" Gus repeated, then added, impatiently: "Aw, come on, now; d' yeh think I'm goin' t' stay here all night?" He seized Jake's arm.

Julia led the way to a settee at the further end of the Hall. She could not have selected a more conspicuous position. To right and left, backed against the walls, extended lines of frail, folding chairs. She seated herself with a sweep of her brown skirt. The only color she wore was the bit of ribbon at her throat. Her cheeks were very red, her eyes very bright, and she had arranged her blue-black hair in such a way that rolls of it fell over her ears, half hiding them. She was by all odds the prettiest girl in the Hall. The other girls knew her, and, as they whirled by, they nodded, and received her nod in return. Whereupon they at once asked their partners who Julia's "new beau" might be. None of the men knew; none had ever seen him before. Frank Kernafsky, on behalf of the Getsky girl—a notorious rival of Julia's—asked Jake, for she remembered that Julia and Jake worked in the same shop. Jake told him. The word was passed along

to the others with many significant grins and winks and wise glances, that might have meant anything or nothing. The information was received with divers expressions of wonder, surprise, and even consternation. Three or four young men released their partners and formed a crescent in front of Julia. They begged the next, the second, or the third—any dance to follow. She refused them all.

“No,” she said to Frank Kernafsky whose features seemed to have melted and run together in a great smile that shone everywhere upon his fat, putty face, “I ain’t goin’ t’ dance much; mebbe not a’ tall. My frien’ here, don’t dance.”

“Who is yer frien’, Julia? I ain’t met him,” ventured the facetious Frank.

Julia’s cheeks assumed a deeper shade of red. She drew between her teeth the edge of her lower lip. Leo sat beside her motionless, his feet planted firmly upon the floor, his hands spread out upon his knees. Julia nudged him and he turned his eyes upon her face.

“Mr. Herrman, lemme introduce Mr. Kernafsky,” she said. The mute read the words from her lips.

He stood up, blushing vividly. Julia had so taken Frank by surprise in offering an introduction, that at first he forgot to hold out his hand. But now he seized the outstretched fingers of Leo and shook

them, listlessly, then turned away to conceal the laughter that was bubbling up within him. Bravely, Julia named her escort to the other young men, prefacing each presentation with a nudge to call Leo's attention to her lips. He shook the hands held out to him, then sat down again.

Little by little the blood receded from his cheeks, and left them as before, yellow-white, like his hair. Three or four girls approached Julia, encouraged in a spirit of fun by their companions, and were likewise presented. As acknowledgment of his pleasure in meeting them, Leo would smile, and a little squeak would issue from his throat.

Thereafter the dancers turned away their heads as they whirled past, that their smiles might not be seen.

Julia knew full well that she had created a sensation, but it was not for the purpose of creating a sensation that she had brought Leo to the party. She felt that her motive had been woefully misunderstood. In a measure she began to regret what she had done. She thought she would like to go off some place where she might be alone, and cry.

After she had sat at the end of the hall with Leo nearly half an hour she saw Jake and Gus approaching her. They ducked this way and dodged that, along the length of the floor, to avoid collision with

the dancers. Both wore broad grins. As they came up to her, all Julia's original spirit returned. She flashed her eyes up at them. They offered their hands to Leo and nodded. He accepted the courtesy doggedly, without smiling.

"Want to dance, Julia?" Jake asked.

"No, I guess not," she replied; "I don't feel much like dancin' t'-night. My! Don' you think it's awful hot in here?"

Jake bent low beside her and whispered.

"No," she answered aloud, "I don' want any beer!"

It was customary for wilted couples to obtain this invigorating beverage in a little refreshment-room down-stairs.

"Aw', come on dance, Julia!" It was Gus who urged her now.

"Didn't I tell you I don't feel like it!" she answered tartly.

Gus took hold of Jake's arm. "Come on," he said. "I ain't goin' t' stand 'round here all night."

Jake turned away sulkily, and Gus followed him.

"I'd let 'er go t' thunder!" the latter offered when they were beyond hearing.

"She kin f'r all o' me," the utterly melancholy Jake replied.

Julia watched Leo's face from the corner of her

eye. Never before in his life, had he "been to" a dance. The rhythmic sway of the dancers, as they passed, fascinated him. His keen pleasure was apparent in every line of his face. Even the curve of his hair where it was plastered to his forehead and brushed back, slick, over his eyebrows, seemed very like the curve of smiling lips.

Julia nudged him. His eyes became fixed upon her lips. In an undertone she told him how she had been asked to dance and had refused all invitations. He seemed very pleased.

"I come with you," she said, "I jus' come with you."

She was conscious that such a reason for refusing dances with old friends was silly, but it would serve. Indeed, she was not quite certain why she had refused in every instance. But at her confession the mute's lips quivered, and he fumbled, bunglingly, with his hands.

"But I'd jus' as soon try it with you, if you want to," she went on.

She held her head to one side.

"That's a polka ; that goes one-two-three; one-two-three—it's easy; jus' that—over and over again. You don't haf t' hear." She tapped the time with her fingers on her knee—one-two-three; one-two-three. "Want to try?"

He shook his head, sadly.

"Oh, yes, try! I'll lead—lead."

She stood up. The spirit of the dance was rampant in her. Leo from his seat looked up into her face. She beckoned to him and he rose. Taking his hand in her own, she placed his arm around her waist. She felt his arm tremble and thought it the result of excitement.

Couples near by nudged each other and indicated the pair with little quick jerks of their heads. The word was passed along—"Julia 'n' that deaf 'n' dumb feller's goin' t' dance! Look at 'em!"

Unconscious of the new interest she had aroused, Julia led her partner a little way out upon the floor. His face was very red. His awkwardness was made fourfold greater by his apprehension of mishap. Julia's feet found the time and she attempted to launch the unhearing Leo. But his feet had passed beyond his control into the jurisdiction of some fantastic imp. He writhed and squirmed. Julia made one great effort to swing his lumbering body into the time of the music. He slipped, felt himself going, clutched her more tightly, and fell, dragging her with him. For a moment they formed a jumble on the floor. Unrestrained laughter followed the accident. Julia felt hot tears of shame rising to her eyes.

There was keen, cutting agony in the look Leo gave her as they seated themselves again. After a moment, Julia said, consolingly, "Never mind"—adding assuringly: "That always happens—the first time—always happens." She repeated the phrase several times. "I might 'a' known!" she muttered under her breath.

The mute had only half understood her. And he shifted his eyes now this way, now that, to avoid the amused glances of the others in the Hall.

Julia was not again asked to dance. It had never been so before. Usually she was surrounded from the moment she came. So, after a little while, she said to Leo: "Had enough? Want to go home?"

He opened his eyes very wide. In a great measure his embarrassment resulting from the mishap had subsided, and he had become again as interested as at first. He touched Julia on the arm and nodded, with his eyebrows raised, interrogatively.

"Yes," she replied, rising, "come on."

They left the Hall; and Julia said "good-night" to no one—a marked breach of her usual custom.

III

As they issued from the hot Hall into the cold of the February night, Julia experienced a keen feeling of relief.

At the corner, Leo pointed to a street car and raised his eyebrows. Julia shook her head, and pointed away from the car to the street. He understood that she preferred walking. It was not far to her home. Three blocks along, they turned into Thurber Street. It was a short street with a flickering electric light at either end. The sidewalks were icy and the girl clung to Leo's arm. Half way down the street, where the light was less strong than at the ends, Leo stopped suddenly.

Julia tugged at the sleeve of his coat.

"What?" she asked.

She noted the twist he gave his lips. He opened his mouth. His entire face seemed to undergo a series of contortions. Great swollen veins stood out markedly around his temples and over his eyes. Julia laid her hand upon his arm again.

"Sick?" she asked.

He bit his lip as he shook his head.

"What then?" She was becoming impatient. It was very cold to stand thus. He started on ahead. Julia kept pace with him, her head turned, watching him narrowly.

At the end of the street he stopped again. Now, in the light of the electric lamp she could see his face clearly. Convulsively he seized her hand.

She shrank back. He did not release his hold. He smote his breast with her tight-held hand.

She jerked away, trembling.

"Say!" she exclaimed, "what's th' matter? Matter! Matter!"

He held up one hand then; the other he placed over his heart. Then suddenly he flung it out and pointed to her own breast. She followed these mystic motions wonderingly and shook her head. A look of great distress came into his eyes and he breathed deeply and seemed to shrink, limp. Then, pulling himself together, he repeated the motions.

Again Julia shook her head. He dropped his hands to his sides. A great wave of pity surged over her. A light broke suddenly across his face. In an upper pocket of his waistcoat he found a stump of pencil; from another pocket he drew out a torn envelope, folded and grimy. He ran on ahead until full within the circle of light. There he stopped and fell to one knee upon the icy pavement. He touched the point of the pencil to his tongue, like a child. After a moment he stood up and held out the bit of paper to the girl. She read the words—three or four—that he had scratched thereon in straggling, uneven characters.

She raised her eyes, filled with fright, to his. She crushed the paper in her hand and stepped back.

"Oh, no! no! no!" she cried. Her face was very pale. Leo, in front of her, held out his arms.

"No! No! No!" she muttered. She shot a quick glance over her shoulder.

Without a word further, she stooped, and gathering her skirts in her hands, turned and fled. The suddenness of her action prevented immediate pursuit on the part of Leo. But now, she heard him behind her. Twice she slipped and nearly fell. Midway in the block she darted across the street. As she ran she dropped her skirts and fumbled in her purse for her key. She stumbled at the short flight of steps leading to the door of her home. The mute had reached the walk in front. She caught a glimpse of him standing there. The rays of the lamp swinging above the street at the corner fell full upon his face. He did not spring up after her as she had thought he might. He stood there, simply holding out his arms to her as he had before.

"No! No! No!" the girl muttered hysterically. She fitted the key into the lock, and without another glance at him entered and closed the door. Within, she stood motionless a moment, listening, her hand on the knob, her cheek against the panel. She heard nothing. The dizziness passed and then, as the pathos, the pity of it all, began, in some degree,

to dawn upon her, she felt her eyes filling with tears.

IV

Julia reached the shop the next morning ten minutes early. Daddy was taking off his coat as she entered.

"Good-mornin'," he mumbled.

"Good-mornin', Daddy," she returned.

Glimpsing her face, the old man exclaimed:

"What's th' matter? You look sick."

"I got a headache," she said.

"Too much dance, huh?"

"I guess so." She smiled plaintively.

She seated herself at the machine and examined the vest that the cutter had given her the afternoon before. The alley door rattled. She started and glanced over her shoulder. It was Gus coming in. The blood receded from her cheeks, leaving them very white. She felt limp and sick.

"Good-mornin'," she managed to say.

Gus grumbled a salutation. Jake came in just as the whistles blew.

"Mornin'," he flung at every one.

Daddy coughed.

Julia thought it strange that Leo had not arrived, yet she was in a measure glad. She wondered if

Jake and Gus could tell by her looks that she was ill. She had not slept more than an hour during the night, and she bent low over her work that they might not see her face.

Daddy had put the finishing touches on the coat.

"Where's Leo?" he asked, sliding off his table.

At first no one answered. After a moment, Jake said: "Guess he had too much dance."

"Dance!" Daddy exclaimed. "What's he got t' do wi' dancin'?"

"I don' know, but he was down t' Patter's las' night," the informer went on. He jerked his head toward Julia.

At his words she felt herself growing hot and cold at once.

The old man shot her one glance, in which wonder and inquiry were mixed, and without speaking, carried the coat into the store.

According to his custom, Grabowsky, the proprietor, entered his shop about ten o'clock.

"Where's Leo?" he asked at once.

There was a moment of silence.

"Ain't been here all mornin'," the old man replied.

"Is he sick?" Grabowsky glanced from one worker to another.

"He was down t' Patter's las' night," Gus volunteered, without looking up from his pressing.

"Patter's!" shouted Grabowsky. "What was he doin' down t' Patter's?"

Gus snickered. Jake bent over his table, covertly smiling. Gus nodded toward Julia.

"Yeh know anythin' 'bout him, Julia?" the proprietor asked, eyeing her, squintingly.

She bit her lip. "No, sir," she replied. "He went to the dance las' night, with me—and—and—and I thought he went home—afterward."

"You go up t' his place at noon, Gus," Grabowsky ordered, "an' see what's th' matter. We can't have anybody quittin' like this, with work pilin' up on us. Tell him if he can't git down here in the mornin', he needn't come at all."

Grabowsky left the work-shop, scowling.

Julia did not go home to her luncheon. She told Daddy she was not hungry. He gave her a slice of bread and butter out of his own box. Gus bolted his scant meal and hastened away to seek Leo.

When he came in, shortly before one o'clock, Daddy asked: "Well, what's th' matter wi' him?"

"I d' know," was the dogged reply; "he ain't there."

"Ain't there!" Julia turned upon him, trembling. "Ain't there! Where is he?"

Gus stared at Daddy at first, and then shifted his eyes to Jake's face as he answered, ignoring Julia.

"Th' woman he lives with tol' me he went away this mornin'. She said he took his thin's in a satchel. He paid her all up."

Julia felt her legs bending like whalebone. She sank upon the chair at the machine. Presently Grabowsky came into the shop. The cutter had told him of Leo's disappearance. He was angry, and bit off his words sharply.

"You see Weil t'-night, Gus. Tell him t' come right down t'-morrow mornin'. I got t' have 'nother man on pants."

"Yes, sir."

Then he disappeared back into the store.

"An' he had six-seventy-five comin'," he said to the cutter. In his surprise the cutter dropped his shears.

Grabowsky found an old paper box and broke off the flange of the cover. Seating himself before his narrow desk, he proceeded to print upon the square of pasteboard.

At five-thirty Jake and Gus prepared to leave. Neither had spoken directly to Julia all day. It was very apparent that she was "queered" by them. Since morning the shop had worn a different air.

Now at closing time, Julia gave no sign of ceasing work. Daddy, too, sewed on in silence.

Some ten minutes after the boys had gone, she got up from the machine and carried the finished vest into the store. Returning, she found the old man ready to leave.

"Goin' my way?" he asked, with a feeble little smile.

She regarded him a moment, doubtfully, then replied with some of her usual gaiety: "Uh huh."

They left by the back way, together. As they issued from the alley and stepped upon the sidewalk in front of the store, Julia saw a sign in the window. The letters were roughly drawn in ink upon a square of card-board:

PANTS MAKER
WANTED

Her spirit waned. Daddy too had seen the sign. They walked on, side by side, without speaking. Somehow, Julia felt that a bond of sympathy held Daddy and her together. Presently she fell to weeping softly.

"What is it? What is it?" the old man asked.

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy," she choked, "I thought I'd die t'-day."

"Yes, yes," he muttered.

"But Daddy, Daddy,—they—made so—much fun of him."

"I know—yes."

"I—I—I—pitied him," she went on. "They made fun of him—I wanted to show 'em——" She broke off completely.

Daddy moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue.

"Yes, yes," he muttered.

"And—and—I took him," she went on, gropingly. "I—I—took him and—and—he—didn't understand—— Oh, Daddy! He didn't understand! He thought——" She ceased speaking. Her breath caught in her throat. They had come to the end of the street. She stopped. The old man lingered beside her.

"*You* see, don't you, Daddy?" she asked, plaintively. Her eyes met his frankly.

The old man laid his thin, work-worn hand upon her arm.

"There, there," he mumbled consolingly, as though speaking to a child, "I see how it is." He swallowed twice and proceeded: "Don't cry. It don't matter. Jus' try an' fergit it. It don't matter—I understan'." There was moisture in his own eyes. "Jus' try an' fergit 'bout it, an' never min'. It don't matter. Good-bye."

He did not look at her again.

"Good-bye, Daddy," she called as he walked away. "You understand, don't yeh, Daddy?"

He nodded.

She watched him until he passed the corner across the way. Turning, then, she moved slowly on, down the short street.

THE PATRIOTS

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1

The Patriots

I

FROM where she sat at the front window of a cottage on Patton Street, Mrs. Brodsky could see almost to the corner of the next street. Directly opposite was a weather-stained barn, from the front wall of which flared a row of posters proclaiming that in Polonia Hall on the evening of the fifteenth, General Stanislaus Lesciwicz would speak.

It was quite by accident that her glance embraced the posters, as she looked out, for she had waddled across the street that morning to read them.

Mrs. Brodsky was a short, squat woman of uncertain age. Her waist-line had long since disappeared, and constant stooping over wash-tubs had curved her shoulders to a bow. Her bosom was broad and deep, and her arms were short and fat. Her steel-blue eyes were set rather close together, and were calm, unlighted, expressionless, save at times, as for instance when Brodsky would hold back more than the dollar willingly allowed him for his beer. Then, they glinted savagely. On her

Up

feet, Mrs. Brodsky was, after a fashion, barbarously majestic; sitting, she became an unresisting, passive, shapeless bulk of flesh.

It had been hot all day; but the window at which she sewed was closed, though the door behind her stood ajar. A breath of air entering by the doorway now and then, caused a gaudy calendar, pinned to the wall across the room, to flutter. The light was failing. The shadows on the floor were creeping toward the centre of the room.

Mrs. Brodsky held close to her eyes the gray overalls which she was patching. She pricked her finger, muttered her annoyance, and let the work fall to her lap.

The outlines of the lounge pushed back against the wall across the room were dim. The stand at its head was vague. A little light still glinted from the glass that covered the crayon portrait of Father Durowsky hanging above it. The cross beneath—a crude affair of ebony—could not be seen at all. Finally all the light of the dying day became concentrated upon the woman at the window.

She commenced to rock, humming wheezily. From the basket on the stool beside her a spool of cotton had rolled to the floor. The rocker encountered it, and the chair brought up with a jerk that elicited from Mrs. Brodsky an exclamation of annoy-

ance. With many grunts she bent her fat body over the arm, groped for the spool, found it, and raised herself puffing, for she was an almost constant sufferer from asthma.

By and by, when it had become quite dark, and the row of posters on the barn opposite were no longer visible, Mrs. Brodsky folded the overalls, thrust her needle into the patch, and carried the garment to the stand at the head of the lounge. The last dart of the day's light struck the portrait of the priest as she stood there, and the glass flickered. She caught the glint in her steely eyes and crossed herself mechanically; then she lighted a glass lamp and set it in the centre of the round table that stood in the middle of the room.

Presently potatoes sizzled in the pan and the tea commenced to boil. Brodsky preferred his tea boiled; and as it made no difference either to Mrs. Brodsky or to John whether it was boiled or steeped, it was to her husband's taste that Mrs. Brodsky catered.

Before the potatoes were ready, she heard his heavy step on the walk outside.

"Got here quick," he said, glancing at the clock as he closed the door.

"Did you ride?" she asked across the stove.

"Yes."

"With who?"

"Kernafsky's boy."

"Ah, hah!"

He sat on the edge of the lounge and unbuckled and removed his heavy shoes, then took off his coat. In the wavering yellow light of the glass lamp he looked old—older than he was. He had just turned his fifty-fifth birthday and was still strong, active, well. All day he traveled the streets in white clothes, sweeping the pavements and pushing from curb to curb a heavy, bungling barrel-cart, painted red and lettered "D. P. W." To the Commissioner's Clerk he was number thirty-two. This number in green was on the cart beneath the letters.

He went to the sink, behind his wife, and washed, sputtering into the handfuls of water with which he drenched his bearded face. He shook his head over the basin; then wiped his face with the towel. His wife set the food on the table. As Brodsky dropped heavily upon the chair at one end, he asked:

"Where's John?"

"Hasn't come yet."

Brodsky glanced at the clock, but said nothing.

After half an hour, when he had finished his meal and was ready for his evening pipe, he asked again:

"Where is he?"

His wife did not answer now.

"He's through by five on Sat'd'y an' it's most after seven," he added.

The door was flung open as he spoke and John stalked into the room. He was yellow-headed and sturdy, with the broad shoulders and the short arms of his people. His eyes were his mother's, but the breadth of brow was his father's.

"Where you been?" Brodsky asked, scowling.

"I don't want no supper—don't you worry." He smiled across the table at his mother, and pulled off his cap. "I was down where they're enlistin' ——"

"Huh?" A look of puzzlement appeared in Brodsky's eyes. Mrs. Brodsky came within the circle of the lamplight, wiping a plate.

John laughed, showing his strong, even, gleaming teeth. "Don't you understand?" he exclaimed. He spoke the language of his people. He leaned forward, gesticulating, and pointed with a stubby forefinger at the palm of his other hand, as he sought to make clear the experience he had undergone.

Brodsky became intent. His arms lay outstretched upon the table. His pipe he had allowed to go out and now he sucked at it unconsciously as it hung, bowl down, from between his teeth. The boy's recital fanned a flame in his eyes. It was the

same flame that the woman, who now stood gazing at him from a place in the shadow, had loved in the days that were dead and gone. She moved noiselessly back to the sink and putting down the plate, stood there motionless, fascinated by the picture made by the excited boy—her son, and the eager man—his father.

“Jake Klesczki 'listed t'-day.”

“Hah!” Brodsky pulled nervously at his long mustache.

“He's goin' into th' Thirty-First. They's only two more days.”

“Hah!” Brodsky muttered again. He rose and without speaking began pacing up and down the room, his arms rigid at his sides, his eyes fixed straight ahead. In his coarse-ribbed blue stockings, white at heel and toe, his step was noiseless. The glowing eyes of the boy followed his every movement; and the voiceless woman at the sink watched them both. Behind the man she saw, like a ghost, another, in the full flush of a glorious youth, and he wore the uniform of a soldier and was marching away, his musket across his shoulder, whilst, from the roadside watched a fresh-cheeked girl whose own eyes were as dry as his; a girl whose heart, though near breaking, was glad and brave—as brave as the heart of the soldier that she loved marching

on and away. He was going to fight for the fatherland he worshiped, even as she worshiped him; against a government he hated, even as she hated the pictured devils in the story books. He was bearing arms valiantly in the cause of Liberty and Freedom.

All this the woman saw, as in a vision. So now she waited and watched in silence.

The man knew, for his part, as did the woman, what was in the heart of the boy who watched him from the chair; but whilst the one was fired by brave thoughts, the other suffered a gnawing agony, and kept silence. He had fought for his country, his ever-blessed country, this man; had helped to bear its cross, had suffered for it in body and soul. What could the eager lad, there on the chair, know of that cross or those sufferings or even of the cause for which they had been borne? But now the *boy's* country was calling—calling *him*; and when a country calls its son, that son must stand forth and answer, "Here!"

Brodsky flung himself upon the lounge and drew on his heavy shoes. He got into his smeared white coat and seized the dirty helmet of his office. A uniform! The boy stood up, his shoulders squared even as his father's were, his eyes alight.

"Come!" Brodsky cried.

He strode toward the door. The woman ventured again within the circle of the lamplight.

"Where you go?" she asked.

"To the priest's house."

She bowed her head, and when she raised it they were gone. For a moment she stood motionless, then drew the rocking-chair nearer the table. For a space she sat there rocking back and forth. With an effort she got upon her feet, and went to the stand at the head of the lounge and took up the roll of overalls. Seating herself in the rocking-chair again, she spread out the coarse garment upon her lap, plucked the needle from the patch where she had thrust it, and resumed her sewing.

II

Father Durowsky called to the man and the boy from the door of his study as his housekeeper, a bent old woman, admitted them to the hallway. The study was a small room; its furniture consisted of a desk, a revolving bookcase, three stiff chairs ranged against the wall, and a lounge covered with gleaming haircloth. A tinted image of the Christ holding in His arms a little child, stood on a slim pedestal in one corner. A framed photograph of some dignitary of the church, yellow in the ineffective lamplight, hung between the two windows

that overlooked the street; beneath dangled a bronze crucifix. On the wall opposite was a large crayon portrait of the Bishop in his robes, and between the door and the image hung a stained engraving of "Christ before Pilate." The floor was spread with a mottled rug, somber in its coloring, worn threadbare at the threshold of the hall, and quite ragged where the desk-chair stood.

Father Durowsky was fat. A wealth of chin melted into the tight band of linen at his neck. All down the front his black coat was soiled from collar to waist-line, and the sleeves, too short even for his short arms, disclosed his mellow wrists. His iron-gray hair, oily and glistening, was brushed straight back from his white, pulpy forehead. His eyes were small and black, and exceedingly brilliant. When speaking, he had a way of stretching out and pursing up his lips till his mouth resembled the top of a woman's knitted purse. When moved to excitement he was wont to run his fingers through his hair, then dust them quite unconsciously on the front of his coat.

"Sit down," he said, with a wave of his hand, to the man and boy who stood side by side, mute, in the doorway. With one accord they moved to the right and sat upon the chairs he indicated. Brodsky ran a forefinger around the brim of his hat. John

stared at his cap which he held between his knees.

"Well,—well;—what now?" The priest seated himself in the swivel chair at the desk across which he stared beneath the yellow shade of the lamp, supporting his fat chin in one fat hand.

Brodsky looked up and cleared his throat.

"It's th' war," he said—"and the boy ——"

"Ah!" The priest let his hand fall.

"And he wants to go? Yes?" he said.

John lifted his eyes.

Brodsky nodded.

"And what does the good wife say?" Father Durowsky's tiny glistening eyes encountered those of the boy.

Brodsky shrugged his shoulders.

The priest stood up. He ran his fingers through his hair and dusted them on his coat. Pacing back and forth behind the desk he stopped now and then as though he would speak, but almost instantly resumed his stride, voiceless. Once he halted before the image and inclined his head. Turning then he said calmly and quite as though to himself:

"It's serious—war."

There was no reply from the motionless figures across the room. From the shadowy corner the priest let his eyes rest an instant upon them, then

resumed, pacing back and forth, and studying a line on the worn rug.

"A serious business—war—Mother! why should we know such a thing as war?"—His voice was calm, passionless. "Men, for an idea, take up arms and go forth to maim and slay—all for an idea—a conviction. Until the end of time men shall live and die, and shall bear and give forth for their convictions. Our Lord has willed it so. No one knows." He lifted his eyes. The faces of the man and the boy expressed nothing. They had heard him speak many words, but he had talked as though speaking to himself and they had not tried to comprehend. Coming nearer he stood in front of John.

"So you want to bear arms?" he said.

The boy looked up into the round face, and his eyes answered.

"For your country?" The priest continued, and hesitated—"And your God?" he added.

He shifted his eyes, then, to Brodsky's upturned face.

"Who knows," he muttered, "who knows?"

"Is it for himself—for adventure that he wants to go?" he asked suddenly, a furrow appearing on his brow.

Brodsky started perceptibly.

"No," he exclaimed.

The furrow vanished. "For the country, then?"

"Yes." There was a fine note of sincerity in the tone of the man's assurance.

"Ah," the priest sighed. He stretched his lips, and puckered them.

"You were a soldier, Brodsky, eh?—Long ago?" he asked quietly.

The man stood erect, his face alight.

"Yes."

"But that was for *your* country."

"Yes." His voice trembled. His breath caught.

"But this," he cried, flinging out both arms, "this is *his* country—as that country—back there—long ago—was mine! Poland he does not know."

"True." The priest nodded. "A man's country is his king—and here the man is king in his own country, eh?" He smiled faintly. "Boy!"

John started and stood up. Their eyes met, nor did the boy's waver.

"Boy! Go!" The voice that before had been so calm now filled all the room. "Go!" He lifted his hand above the lad's bowed head and, in a mumbling sing-song, uttered words that neither the man nor the boy could comprehend. Then he

pointed to the door, and they glided past him into the dark hallway.

Standing on the threshold of his study the priest heard the outer door close and their quick footfalls on the steps. Sinking into the chair at his desk he hid his face between his outstretched arms. A tremor shook his broad shoulders. There was not a sound. Noiselessly he pulled out a drawer. On the desk before him he set a box. He opened it. Removing a layer of cotton, he lifted out a ribbon from which dangled a medal such as soldiers sometimes win, such as queenly fingers sometimes pin upon the breasts of humble clods. He held the glinting bauble up to the light. With a convulsive movement he pressed the disc of metal to his lips and again hid his face between his arms. When next he raised his head there were tears upon his cheeks, and he cried aloud:

“Oh, Holy Mother, direct me in all the actions of my life, but most, to-night, make clear to me I've not done wrong!”

III

Men in fresh, creased uniforms had been marching in the streets all day. At the heads of the companies strode beardless young officers, who wore their swords with an awkward dignity and

looked neither to right nor left. Older men on nervous horses which they sat uncomfortably, cantered back and forth, saluting the young infantrymen, as they passed. The gold of their regimentals glittered. When the horses settled to a slow trot, their riders bobbed up and down in the most ludicrous manner. Some of them bent forward at an acute angle to reduce the concussion. Frequently, at the passage of one of these, the people on the sidewalk laughed and jeered, but generally a funereal solemnity prevailed that was as marked among the spectators as among the uniformed men in the streets.

At the various saloons near the red-brick railway station where the troops were to take train, little groups gathered, towards evening, and prophesied. Arms and accoutrements, canteens, haversacks, rolled blankets, belts, lay in piles here and there on the station platform. The women and young girls regarded these implements of war with an awe that was tempered by curiosity.

"They ain't any ice in Cuba," one said.

"Ain't they?"

"No."

"What'll they do for cold water?"

"They won't have any, I guess; Charley says they won't."

"Don't it git awful hot down there?"

"I should say it did; Charley says sometimes it gits a hundred and fifteen."

"My! That's hotter'n it gits here, ain't it?"

"I should say so."

"And it's hot enough t'-day! Phew!"

"Girls! Look! There's the Governor!"

A tall, heavy man, wearing a straw hat and a flannel suit, had succeeded in pushing his way through the crowd. At the gateway in the high iron fence he stooped and peered between the bars, down the tracks of the railway yard. As he turned, the crowd saw how haggard his face was.

"Are the trains made up?" he asked.

The gateman touched his cap. "Not yet, sir," he replied, with a little smile.

The Governor pulled at his whisk of beard. Just then some one at the back of the crowd cried:

"Wha's th' matter wi' th' Guv'ner!"

The answer drowned the whistles, the clang of bells, and the hiss of escaping steam.

"H-e-e-e-e's aw' right!"

The shadow of a smile came into the big man's tired eyes and he raised his hand.

"Shut up!" some one yelled. "He's goin' t' say somethin'."

"No, friends," was the reply. "I'm not going

to make a speech; I couldn't if I wanted to—not now. I guess we're all down here for the same purpose—to see our boys off. What's the use cheering *me*? Cheer *them*! They're going away. They're going away to fight—to fight for their country and their flag—and yours—and mine. Cheer *them*—not *me*. *I'm* not going. God knows I'd like to, but I've got to stay here at home and see that this old State gives those boys down there everything it can to make them comfortable. Cheer them—don't cheer me. Why, the smallest fellow around here, with only a drum, is a bigger man than the Governor of this whole State, or any other State, to-day. That's all. Now cheer them, friends, every one of you. Now! One! Two! Three!”

And all the mechanical sounds were drowned again in the cry that sprang from the throats of the crowd. Some of the women waved their handkerchiefs and shrieked; others screwed their fingers into their ears.

As the Governor pushed his way back through the multitude of upturned faces, hands reached out to grasp his. He was not smiling now. At last he managed to reach the edge of the crowd.

A strange silence pervaded the waiting-room of the station. Young lads in uniforms sat between

old men and women. The Governor mingled with them, stopping now to shake hands with a boy, again to speak a word of cheer to the woman beside him, whose work-worn hand lay tenderly on a blue sleeve. He sought to comfort a weeping mother and spoke lightly to a father whose own voice sounded thick in his throat. He saw the mother-pride glowing in eyes that were moist; and the father-love in faces that were lined and seamed; and his own great heart overflowed with a tender pity.

In his dirty white suit, Brodsky sat beside his wife on one of the rattan-backed benches near the door. Over her bowed shoulders she wore a gray shawl. Between them sat John in the uniform of a private of infantry. His blanket roll lay on the floor at his feet; his canteen and haversack he held on his knees. Brodsky recognized the Governor, and mumbled to his wife who beamed upon the big man, while the boy, between them, sat erect on the hard bench. The Governor came to them, and all three stood up. Brodsky weakly took the hand that was held out to him, smiled, and wagged his head. His wife locked her fingers in front of her contentedly.

"This your boy?" the Governor asked.

"Yes."

To John then he gave his other hand.

"Be proud of this boy," he said. "So," he added, noticing the dangling number from the crossed guns on the lad's campaign hat, "my son is in your regiment."

Brodsky regarded his wife wonderingly an instant, then a grin spread across his face.

"You his mother?"

The woman nodded. "Yes; hey Chon?" she said.

"And you must be proud of him too. Well, my boy, good-bye, and God bless you."

He pressed the soldier's hand and walked away. The trio sank upon the bench again, and at once fell into a conversation in half whispers. A friend of the Governor's who had observed the little scene with peculiar interest caught the Governor's sleeve as he passed.

"Oh, hello, Tompkins," the big man exclaimed.

"Governor, is there anything I can do?"

"Not a thing. They'll be getting off in half an hour."

"Say, that was a sort of striking picture you made talking to that street cleaner and his boy."

"Tompkins, that's the finest thing I've seen to-day. That man sweeps the streets for one dollar and seventy-five cents a day. She, the mother,

probably takes in washing. The boy, likely as not, works in the Stove Works, or somewhere. And now he's going down to Cuba to be shot at."

"Germans?"

"No, Poles."

"Oh, that so? One of their own patriots speaks to-night up in a hall in their section, I've read. Quite a man, according to the papers. Been through half a dozen wars, and exiled for his trouble. Has something to do with a museum in Switzerland now. He's lecturing round the country, and taking up collections. Polish museum, I believe."

IV

Three long trains were backed up to the iron fence that edged the station platform. A new activity possessed the crowd. A dozen infantrymen fell upon one of the piles of accoutrements. One seized a gun; another a belt and haversack, another a blanket roll which he proceeded, with much difficulty, to hang upon himself. Above the human noises there were heard the clink of steel, the rasp of canvas, the snap of fastenings. Here and there a red-eyed woman clung to a blue form passionately. A slim girl hung upon the arm of a white-faced young fellow.

Brodsky elbowed his way through the throng in the wake of John. His wife, constantly muttering imprecations in a strange tongue and grunting when an elbow was thrust into her side, squeezed close behind him, her bonnet awry. John brought up at the gate rail and his father and mother pressed close to him. As those ahead were passed through he worked nearer and nearer the aperture in the tall iron fence. Just before he passed through he muttered something to his father. His mother, overhearing, smiled broadly. Brodsky laughed aloud. The deep laugh jarred upon the symphony of sobs that otherwise prevailed. Hurrying down the platform John swung himself aboard the last car and without once glancing back passed out of sight.

Brodsky wormed his way back through the throng. His wife, jostled from side to side, suffered an agony which was manifest in her face. Brodsky issuing from the station into the street, waited for her at the corner. There, for a moment, they spoke together. The woman nodded. She went, waddling, in one direction, her bonnet still awry; while stooping, though with a brisker step, he went another way.

V

For more than an hour the slender gas brackets on each side of the low stage at the end of the

room had been lighted; and now, with the hall half filled, the atmosphere was odorous and heavy. Above the fan-shaped flames of yellow, the air shone with a metallic blue-green lustre. So feeble was the illumination that the faces of the audience were half in shadow. Presently a man came down the main aisle carrying a long pole with a tiny flame at its end. Turning on the gas in the big chandelier dependent from the middle of the ceiling, he lighted one of the jets and the flame raced around the ring, to become a circle of light.

Before eight o'clock the crowd completely filled the long, narrow hall from the stage to the street entrance. Many of the late comers, unable to find seats, perched themselves upon the window sills. Two, and sometimes three, sat thus on each sill. Expectancy was in every countenance. The men's faces, bearded for the greater part, were thrust this way and that; the women seemed less nervous; their faces expressed less eagerness, more patient hope. The seats were camp chairs with wooden slats, and so closely pressed was the throng that the supports were not to be seen; and the men and women had the appearance of dumpy, broad-chested pygmies. There was not a child visible; the range of life was from middle years to tottering age.

The men, for the greater part, wore their work-

clothes,—coarse grays or broad-ribbed corduroys. Here and there was a touch of color. Brown was the general shade of the waistless women's garments. Brodsky, sitting beside his wife near the rear end of the hall, wore a coat of dusty green. His wife held her shawl across her knees, her two fat hands outspread upon it passively, palms up. Whilst Brodsky shifted his head this way and that, nervously, expectantly, she blinked at the lights with calm indifference. No conversation marked the passage of the minutes as eight o'clock approached. The only sounds were those of breathing or when some one vainly sought to ease his position and moved a chair on the rough, bare floor.

Shortly before the hour there was a commotion at the rear of the hall. Necks craned, eyes stared. Presently Father Durowsky worked his way through the jam at the entrance and proceeded down the aisle, his hands clasped complacently over his stomach. At his heels trotted a little old man, who glanced neither to the right nor to the left. The coat he wore was cut in a curious fashion, and across his breast was a broad ribbon upon which medals gleamed. In his lapel, a gem twinkled in the yellow light. He trotted along with his hands clasped behind him. His face was dark. As he passed, whisperings ensued.

"Little, eh?"

"Yes, in body, but—head——" The speaker touched his own low forehead and shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"How many wars?"

"Four."

"So many?"

"See the things on his breast."

"They were given him for his bravery."

"There are many."

"No more than he should have."

"No?"

"Yes."

"He must have been a brave soldier to have so many."

"The bravest in all Poland."

"But he cannot live there now?"

"No, they sent him away."

"There is no war in Poland now?"

"Only in the hearts of her sons."

"God help them!"

"He lives in Switzerland, in the great Museum, there. He has charge of the Museum."

"Yes, I know Switzerland—the Republic of Switzerland. Szippe was a Swiss—and a soldier, too."

"Will he talk of Switzerland?"

"No, fool; he will talk of Poland."

A dead silence, then the strike of wood on wood. The whispering ceased. The men straightened in their chairs; the women leaned back complacently.

"Ss—Father Durowsky—he speaks."

Brodsky nudged his wife and scowled reprovingly for no cause. She muttered and returned the scowl; then both gazed fixedly at the stage whereon the priest stood beside a frail, three-legged table that supported a glass and a white pitcher. He looked over the silent, adoring throng, from the front rows beneath him to the rear of the hall where many were standing. He ran his fingers through his hair, and then he spoke.

At first his low, musical voice was not heard beyond the fifth row. Brodsky leaned forward and made a shell of his hand behind one ear, his head aslant. In their own tongue their priest complimented the throng, and referred to the great privilege a kind fate had granted them. As he proceeded his voice gained power until at last he was distinctly heard even by those who stood uneasily near the door. With an occasional gesture, and at times with considerable emotion, he recited the varied accomplishments of the little man behind him, who during the introduction pulled at his white moustache nervously. Once or twice, at some word of

their priest's, a titter rippled over the crowd. Whenever this occurred Brodsky, without turning his head, thrust his elbow into the billowy body of his wife.

A little surprise had been planned for the end of the meeting, the speaker said, a little surprise that he hoped would meet with the audience's approval, as it did with his; also there would be a collection taken—a collection for the benefit of the Museum of Polish Antiquities.

"And now we shall listen to General Lesciwicz," he concluded, turning and indicating the little white-haired man with a wave of his hand. He sat down smiling, pursing and stretching his lips in the manner that was his.

The soldier and man of medals came quickly to the edge of the rostrum. Brodsky thrust his elbow into the body of his wife again, and she mumbled and scowled. The hands of the little man bothered him at first. He held them down at his sides, then clasped them over his breast, then locked them behind him. He may have wished himself in the fire of battle where one has no time to think of one's hands. He cleared his throat. He could not be heard, at first. Brodsky craned further forward. Some one at the back cried: "Speak up!" It annoyed the little man. Those who perceived his an-

noyance, glanced back over their shoulders scowling. But presently the soldier found himself, and thereafter it was not difficult to hear him.

His manner of delivery was characteristic; now unemotional, now wildly passionate. He would stand perfectly still and recite in a dreary sing-song; then, of a sudden, his arms would fly above his head, and he would pace up and down the stage, fetching up again in the middle and bringing his hands together with a resounding thwack. Occasionally he would assume a statuesque pose, one foot in advance of the other, his arms folded, standing thus until the applause and cheering had subsided. He reviewed the history of Poland from the beginning to the last hour. When he began upon the tyranny of Russia and of Germany in later years, picturing by word strokes, with all the genius of the artist in pigments, the despair of the people when their little children in the schools were robbed of their language even, the spirit of deadly hate appeared in the eyes of every man who heard him. Brows darkened, and jaws became set. The effect upon the craning Brodsky was hypnotic. As he drank in the speaker's words he smacked his lips energetically upon the strong phrases, and shuffled his heavy feet in response to the rolling periods. His eyes changed with every utterance; he smiled,

scowled, hated, murdered—with his eyes. The muscles of his neck were tense. Once he seemed upon the verge of apoplexy. Beside him sat his wife unmoved, her fat hands clasped, her eyes staring blankly at the speaker on the stage.

Deeper, stronger, more splendid became his passion. His bold speeches burned like hot iron into the hearts of his hearers. Tortured as they were, and chafing, they yet were quiet. But the tense stillness was like that dead silence that armies seem to hold the instant before the rifles spit venomously, and the cannons roar with hate.

The soldier was nearing the end of his address. A thousand pictures of the mother-land, beautiful and somber, he had painted. To his hearers it was as though an immense cyclorama had been unrolled before them, in which, perchance, they saw themselves, or those they loved, writhing under the lash. They saw quiet homes as well, with women moving about, children tugging at their skirts; men in the fields listening at the heart of nature. They heard a gun, and saw the men running from the fields toward the quiet homes, seizing the children, and protecting the women with their bodies. Then they saw battle-fields with bleeding corpses prone and naked at the roots of roadside crosses and in the doorways of the churches. They saw dead

children under trees; women, with streaming hair, praying to God from beside a mangled corpse. They saw the brown fields converted into red swamps of blood and carnage, with smoke rising here, there, and moving across and back; flames leaping longitudinally from plague spots which they knew were cannon mouths; animals and men, a chaotic mass, bleeding, heartless, dead; and then, even while they watched, a shivering heaven cast upon the scene, as though to blot it out, a pure white snow.

The speaker, his face livid, rushed down to the edge of the platform, and flinging his arms above his head, cried:

“Poland! Poland! Forever!!”

He had played with his audience; had held them in bonds whilst he goaded them, but now had touched the spring of the manacles that bound them. With a great cry they leaped to their feet. The air trembled; their clamor filled the room. They pushed back one another to reach the stage, swaying, struggling. The women who tried to hold them in check were flung off. The audience became a seething mass of animals moved by the human motive of revenge. It was as though they expected the little man who faced them, his arms folded across his heaving breast, to show them the way; to

point out to them the road that they should take, that would lead them on to Liberty.

The priest came down to the edge of the platform and raised a restraining hand. Then, above the clamor rose the high voices of children singing. Brodsky, who with a lusty cheer had been among the first to gain his feet, whirled around.

"Make way!" some one cried. And the cry was taken up and echoed. "Make way! Make way!" The middle aisle was cleared in a trice.

A troop of little girls, all in white, advanced to the stage. As they marched they sang a battle hymn. The old soldier, standing there beside the priest, caught the rhythm, and his body swayed in time with it, and he waved his arms and muttered words as the children sang. In their hair were paper flowers, and the one who led the way bore upon a red pillow a golden wreath that caught the light and glinted it. This, then, was the surprise. The children trooped upon the stage. From the scarlet pillow the priest lifted the wreath and placed it on the soldier's brow. The old man burst into tears, flung his arms around the holy father's neck and hid his seamed, scarred face upon his breast.

Then a cheer, mightier than all the rest, went up from bursting throats. The women even, strangely moved, joined, to rend the air with sound. In the

midst of the uproar the priest pushed the weeping soldier gently away, and darting into a little room off the rostrum returned with a basket which he placed at the edge of the platform.

"Here!" he cried. "Here; you may drop what you can, for Poland's sake! Form a line—a line, and let there be no crowding!"

Brodsky had long since lost his head. To his wife, at whose tugging on his arm he had not paid the slightest heed, he now cried:

"Go home!—the brown pitcher—bring it all."

"Ah," she muttered, and hesitated. He clenched one fist. "Go," he commanded.

She moved away. He watched her bulky figure until it became lost in the crowd.

VI

As Mrs. Brodsky passed out of the hall, the line which had formed began its march past the basket on the stage.

Once or twice during the evening Mrs. Brodsky had been moved by something akin to emotion, but now, under the stars, with a cool breeze from off the Lake caressing her fat cheek, the enthusiasm ebbed and left her passionless, calculating.

The brown pitcher!

As she waddled on, she estimated how long it

had taken to save the contents of that brown pitcher. To be sure, there was more in the bank, but the brown pitcher was for Easter Monday, when the city would sell at auction certain houses standing on land that had been confiscated for street uses. And the brown pitcher was full—quite full.

He had said: "Bring it all!"

Mrs. Brodsky was still calculating as she fumbled with her key at the door. Entering she moved, despite the dark, across the room to the table above which, on a shelf, the brown pitcher stood. She lifted it down carefully and brought it to the front window. A ray from the electric light on the corner shone upon her as she stood there.

He had said: "Bring it all!"

She calculated even as she counted the money. There were almost sixty-seven dollars in the brown pitcher—quite enough to buy a house at the city's auction sale.

VII

When Mrs. Brodsky appeared in the hall, her husband rushed to her crying: "Give it to me!" and into his open hands she thrust the money. He fell into line then and lent his voice to the rocking song the throng was singing. The shrill notes of the little girls who stood in a group on the platform

rose, pipingly, above the roar of the men in line. It was a concert of discord in which the older women took no part.

"Poland! Forever!" Brodsky shouted as he flung the money into the basket.

The cry was taken up. "Poland forever! Poland! Forever!"

At the door, Mrs. Brodsky was waiting for him. He seized her arm. "Come," he said, and together they issued into the night.

VIII

After the warmth of the day and the furnace heat of the hall, the night air was sweetly cool. Brodsky drew great breaths deep into his lungs and exhaled them noisily. He walked ten feet in advance of his wife and as he strode on he talked to himself, and now and again flung out his arms impetuously. Mrs. Brodsky, waddling behind him, grinned craftily at his back.

She lighted the glass lamp and set it in the centre of the table. Brodsky had taken off his shoes and now was rocking back and forth. He gazed at the ceiling. He did not speak while his wife moved heavily about, setting things aright. She locked and bolted the door. The snap of the bolt caused Brodsky to start. His eyes dropped from the ceil-

ing to the narrow moulding; then down a little tract of the flowered wall paper to the shelf. The light chanced to fall upon the brown pitcher in such a way that it gleamed white. Brodsky gazed at the splotch as one fascinated.

Presently he rose from the rocking-chair and his stockinged feet moved noiselessly across the floor. He reached up and took down the brown pitcher. Behind him Mrs. Brodsky looked on curiously. Misjudging the pitcher's weight it slipped from his fingers and falling struck the table and was shattered to pieces. Out upon the table and to the floor tumbled crumpled bills and jingling coins. He turned slowly and his eyes met his wife's but hers expressed nothing.

"See what you did," she muttered reprovingly.

Without replying he went back to the chair, and, seating himself, fell to rocking again. Mrs. Brodsky got down upon her knees and began a search for the coins that had fallen to the floor. She held her head in such a way that, had he looked, he could not have seen the smile that lingered on her face.

IX

On Easter Monday Brodsky bought a white house with green blinds and a fair picket-fence for fifty-two dollars. The house that he had dreamed of

owning was sold to Stephen Merkowicz for eighty-seven dollars. But Brodsky was satisfied.

John came home as one of the guard that accompanied the body of the Governor's son.

THE WILL OF ANTON TSCHAECH

The Will of Anton Tschaecche

I

IN the waning light of a winter day a boy and girl stood before a low-roofed, narrow brick building, that rose flush with the sidewalk, halfway down the block. The girl was taller than the boy, and held his hand. She wore an old shawl that covered her head and trailed to a fringed point at her heels. The lad's overcoat was much too large for him, and now and then he raised his disengaged hand and wriggled back the sleeve. Putting down her basket the girl tip-toed to the window. There was a rent in the shade, and, half crouching, she peeped through.

The yellow light shone upon her pale, pinched face. Presently she stooped and whispered to the boy; then lifted him clear of the walk, that he, too, might peep through the rent in the shade. After a moment her strength gave way, and the boy slipped through her encircling arms.

"Did yeh see?" she asked in a whisper, and glanced up and down the deserted street guiltily.

He nodded.

"Come on, den," she said; and taking up the basket which she carried with both hands, her body bent back, she set off down the street. The boy followed, busy with the sleeves of his overcoat.

The electric light at the corner below sputtered fitfully, then burned steadily. Instinctively the boy and girl looked back with one accord. The street was quite brilliant now, and in the glare the sign above the door of the house before which they had loitered gleamed golden. They made out the name—"Anton Tschaeché," and wondered at the next word as they often had, in passing, by daylight, with their push-cart—"Costumer."

Through the rent in the curtain, Crissy Morowsky and her brother had seen what all the children in the colony many times had seen—when there was no towering policeman about.

They had seen a long room, the floor covered with a worn carpet, boxes piled almost to the ceiling on two sides, and cases holding strange things, like human heads, ranged back against the boxes at the front. Midway down the room stood a tall mirror covered with pink mosquito netting which was drawn up at the corners and tied with stiff bows of green ribbon. Beyond the mirror was a square table, littered, at which sat an old man and a

young girl. The old man's white beard was long and ragged, and he wore a skull-cap. He was bent over a great book that lay open on the table. The girl sat opposite him, sewing bright cloth with tinsel thread that glistened and sparkled in the yellow light of the lamp. On the floor at the girl's feet was a crescent of baskets and coverless boxes running over with gay fabrics. In the shadow stood two or three still, wire forms draped with glaring costumes of some historical significance.

This had the children seen through the rent in the window-shade.

II

As the girl sewed, the old man mumbled over the big book so placed that the light fell upon the brilliant costume plates. Now and again he would draw a great red-and-yellow handkerchief from the pocket of the long, bedraggled dressing-gown he wore, and polish the lenses of his round spectacles. As she sewed, the girl hummed a quaint air, but the old man did not seem to hear. Presently, with some excitement he arose, and crossing the room seized one of the draped forms and dragged it within the yellow circle of the lamplight. He glanced from it to a picture in the book—after polishing his spectacles again. Then he compared the

picture with the costume in detail, seizing the slashed sleeves and scrutinizing the sewing of the braid that ornamented them. The ingenuity of the braided design on the bodice pleased him and he smiled.

"The same," he said, sinking into the chair and shutting with a bang the covers of the book. He stared at the costume gloatingly, a faint shadow of the smile still playing around his mouth and the outer corners of his eyes.

"The masterpiece!"

He flung one arm across the table. "See, Paula," he said. "Look."

The girl put down her sewing, ceased humming, and together they gazed adoringly at the draped form.

"Is it not beautiful?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, "very beautiful—ah, so beautiful."

His thin claw-like hand closed over hers, soft and plump, and he said in the language of his youth:

"You think so. Ah, if my Paula—my little granddaughter, thinks so, I am glad, for it is all for her—love, work, all." He withdrew his hand then, and added in another tone: "But will it suit? Ah, that is the question. But we'll take it to

the theatre Monday—Paula and her grandfather, and if it does suit we'll get the money, and then—Michael, what a supper, what a dinner—maybe both!" and he squeezed her hand again, like a lover, and she smiled at his feeble gaiety.

"Of course it will suit; of course it will," she exclaimed as though there could exist no shadow of a doubt.

"Supper reminds me; do you know what day it is? Yes, Saturday, and we've not been to market."

"Ah, I forgot."

Rising and shuffling across the room to a spindle-legged secretary, he opened a drawer and took out an old flat purse which he brought back to the table. He opened it with fingers that trembled, while Paula put on her hat and coat.

"How much?" he asked.

"What do you want me to get?"

His lips twitched and then he exclaimed: "Ah, Paula, pigs' feet! That is it, pigs' feet."

"Good, then."

He gave her fifty cents. "Be careful of it," he cautioned, and her laugh tinkled in his ears even after the door had closed and her footfalls had ceased to echo from the flags outside.

III

Quite alone in the house he went to the secretary again, and from a thin drawer drew out a slim packet of papers folded evenly. He spread them in a row on the table and bent over them. He muttered as he examined them, smiling craftily to himself the while:

“Paula, you don’t know; no, you don’t know, do you, little Paula? You’re too young yet, but some day maybe; yes, some day. It might have been a boy, then it would have been a grandson, for girls are no good; but it was a granddaughter, so I’ve made the best of it; and—it’s all for you, Paula—child of my child.”

Thus he studied the papers a long time. Now and then he lifted his eyes and glanced around him, and whenever he did, his last look was toward the costume on the form. His life was all in this ancient world that he had created out of his brain, and to which Paula’s fingers had given a tangible reality.

The reference in the will to her who had died—Paula’s mother—and, in turn, her mother, set his memory whirring; and, like mechanical pictures, remembrances flew across the screen of his consciousness. In the sudden flood he seemed almost to remember his baptism in the big church at

home—then he smiled at the absurdity of the fancy. But he could recall his courting of Helena vividly enough. Ah, no, there was no mistake, no fancy there. It was clear, living, complete. And he remembered, too, the marriage in the same big church. He saw again the twisted face of the beggar-cripple hovering at the door with his brush wet with holy water to bless them as they came out—he and his bride. The beggar was shockingly deformed and glared up at them like a great toad. He frightened Helena who took his presence for a bad omen, and hastily made the sign of the cross thrice, and glanced back over her left shoulder thrice also, to dissolve the devil's charm. And those five years on the tailor's bench before setting out to cross the sea! Ah, yes, he remembered those five years; every little hard detail of them. In the strange, new city, Helena the wife and mother died and another and a smaller Helena grew to girlhood. What had become of Morowsky with whom he had worked, learning the costumer's art? Those were happy days with the costumes, the beautiful cloths and fine threads. But the clouds thickened when Helena married Kolansky, who unfortunately was killed one day in the falling of a derrick, when his child Paula was three years old.

Helena, the daughter, not long after, went to join her husband, and to the old father she left a legacy in little Paula. With her, the old man had journeyed to the western city where rents were cheaper and where were more of his people, indeed one-time acquaintances, even old-home neighbors who had been driven from the homeland—ah, the homeland!—because they had thought their own thoughts, because the little fires of Liberty could not be quenched in their tortured hearts!

Korowsky was to blame for the western journey, for had he not written: "Come where I am; your trade will thrive here, for they have many masquerades, and the schools, they say, are good, though I don't know, for we've no little ones."

Seventeen years ago! Seventeen years! A long time, a very long time, and Paula was no longer the child with a love only for corn and candy, but a young woman; now just a year younger than the first Helena. Seventeen years! All this time in the low-roofed home-shop with the golden sign gleaming above the door!

How tenderly he had watched over the bud of the girl's youth which he had seen open little by little until now she was to him the full blossom of fresh young womanhood. All she knew of the new world she had learned from him and from the

customers, for she had never gone to school. What good can schools do a girl? When it comes to a fight for Freedom, what can a girl do but cut bandages and make lotions? One need not go to school to learn these things. If she had been a boy—but then, she was not a boy. All day she sewed, often at night earning extra money for acting as a maid to fine ladies who could not comb their own hair, and loved the caress of the girl's deft fingers. But she was not theirs; she was his, her old grandfather's, child of his child.

Tschaeché took off his spectacles and polished them briskly, then wiped his eyes. He folded the papers neatly and bound them together with a bit of thread and carried them back to the writing desk.

"Ah, it has been hard," he mumbled in the tongue of the homeland, as he turned the key in the drawer-lock and dropped it tinkling into the vase that stood on the desk. "Hard, and she doesn't know. Plgs' feet, bah. I eat them because they are cheap, that's all. To save the more for her, and it will all be hers if only she's honest, and good, and doesn't ——"

The front door rattled. He pulled himself together and forced a smile as Paula entered the room, carrying many parcels. Her cheeks glowed and her eyes were sparkling.

She tumbled the packages upon the table designating the contents as she did so.

"That's tea, that's cloves, that's kraut, that's sausage, and that's—guess, grandfather."

He held up both hands. "I cannot," he said.

"Pigs' feet," and she flung her arms around his neck and kissed him. He stroked her hair gently.

She carried the things into the back room which served as kitchen and dining-room in one.

"And who did you see?" he called to her.

"I saw Father Durowsky," she answered.

"Any one else?" he asked as she hung up her coat and hat.

"No—oh, yes, I saw Nicholas Badsky." Her face was turned from him.

"He whose name is not good enough for him," he sneered. "He who calls himself Geddings, and only wears fine clothes and goes to dances. And what had *he* to say to *you*?"

"Nothin' much," she answered lightly. "He goes away the first of the month—to Buffalo. He's going to be a book-keeper." She seated herself at the table and took up her sewing.

"Bah!" Tschaeche sneered, "a book-keeper is it? A fraud! He's no good! He'll fall in evil ways, you see. He's forgotten his people; Father Durowsky was telling me only yesterday he never

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came once to see them before they died. All he can do is dance and wear fine neckties."

Paula bit off a long thread.

"Put up the sewing," the old man exclaimed suddenly. "It's time to go to bed. I told the Father we'd both be at mass to-morrow."

In her room above she heard him locking the doors, then his faltering step on the stairs. Long into the night she lay awake, and through the thin partition she heard his deep regular breathing.

IV

On another night, some three weeks later, Crissy Morowsky and her brother Stephen were trundling a two-wheeled push cart through the deserted street. The cart was piled high with bits of old boards, a few discarded paving blocks and sections of laths to which fragments of dirty gray plaster still clung. The girl pushed the cart; the boy walked beside it. Though he steadied the load as best he could, now and then one of the blocks would tumble off and roll into the gutter. Whenever this occurred the girl with an exclamation of anger regularly boxed the boy's ears. As they approached the corner below the shop whose golden sign blinked in the electric light, the girl saw a man standing in the shadow at the corner. Then the

shop door opened and the muffled figure of a girl came out. She carried a satchel which she put down as she cautiously closed the door. She joined the man at the corner below and he took the satchel, then the deeper black of the cross-street swallowed them.

Anton Tschaecche learned but little—still, enough—from the note, written in Polish, that Paula pinned to the door of his room where he would be sure to see it in the morning. He deciphered the few lines in the dim light of the hallway, first; then shuffled down the stairs. In the kitchen by the window that overlooked the alley, where a boy and a girl were poking among ash-piles with sticks, he read the note again. It was not until he lifted his eyes and looked out that the old man understood; that the numbness passed away and the load upon his heart lifted. With a sudden new vigor he rushed into the shop-room and up the stairs, the heels of his slippers clattering, the note still clutched in one hand. He pushed open the door of Paula's room cautiously from habit, as though fearing to awaken her. But she was not there; and he flung the door back and stood upon the threshold, staring, wide-eyed, about the room. Realization came to him then that was sharper and more perfect. He felt dizzy, and leaned against the wall. At last he

groped his way down-stairs and entered the work room. Somehow, and without seeing, he still saw the silent machine standing against the wall, and the wire forms splendidly royal in their draperies. The touch of Paula's fingers seemed to be on everything; her presence he sensed in the silence of the early morning. With a groan he sank upon a chair at the table and hid his face between his outstretched arms.

V

It was thus that Father Durowsky discovered him half an hour later. Knocking at the outer door and receiving no response from within, the priest, finding the door unfastened had entered, for a good-morning. He saw the old man at the table and thought him asleep.

"Here, here!" he exclaimed, and stamped his feet.

Tschaeche raised his head. At sight of his face the priest stepped back. The old man's tears had fallen upon a page of the open costume book beneath his arms and a picture that had been of a fairy princess was now a blotch of reds and greens and purples.

Wondering, the priest waited for some word. When at last it was vouchsafed him he too under-

stood. Speech seemed to bring a certain relief to Tschaeche, and to transform his first tender sorrow to a cold, dispassionate, sullen anger. He clenched one fist and shook his head and uttered a profane word. Father Durowsky lifted a restraining hand.

"You forget yourself, Anton," he said. The old man subsided meekly.

"But to think," he went on after a moment. "I have done so much. I have saved all—all for her! Now—the fine necktie, bah! But by St. Josophat, she'll have not a penny! Not a penny!" He became all excitement. "Wait!" he cried.

He shuffled across the room to the writing-desk in the corner. His trembling fingers found the key in the vase and unlocked the drawer.

"See—you know it!" And he held out a folded sheet of paper which the priest took, cautiously, and turned over in his hand.

"Yes, I know it," he said, giving it back.

"My will; my gift," the old man went on disconnectedly. "All for her! But now!" He crumpled the sheet in his hand and flung it on the floor and spat upon it.

"Ah, ah," cautioned the Father.

"Not now!" Tschaeche stormed, pacing up and down the room. "Not for her now; and for

him to spend. The fine necktie! Bah! Not a penny! I tear it up! I make another! A good one. I give half to you; half to the big church at home! Yah! That I do!" He stooped, picked up the paper and made as though to pull it into bits. "Not a penny! Not a penny!" he repeated over and over, at the same time unconsciously smoothing the sheet and folding it. "I make a new one! I burn this up! She shall see! And he shall see! The fine necktie! Bah! He whose name is not good enough for him and who must be a book-keeper in Buffalo! It is well his people are dead that they may not know the shame of it. They shall see!" He had shuffled back to the writing-desk. He thrust the paper into the drawer, turned the lock and dropped the key clinking into the vase.

"Another!" he went on, half to himself, as he paced to and fro, his fists clenched behind him. "Half to you; half to the big church! He shall see! Bah!"

Father Durowsky bore with him while the storm of his anger raged, and then, when it had somewhat subsided talked to him calmly.

"She will come back, Anton," he said. "She will come back, and you must forgive as God"—he raised his eyes to the smoked ceiling—"as God forgives you."

"Never! I? Never! She has made her bed; now she must sleep in it! She shall not come back!"

Nor was the holy Father able to shake the determination that had formed in Anton Tschaeché's mind, a determination born of great suffering. But at the door he repeated the injunction:

"You must forgive!"

The old man's brow contracted. He brought his clenched fist down on the table exclaiming, "No! I say, No!"

And the priest walked away, his hands clasped at his back, his eyes on the pavement.

VI

Soon, all the quarter came to know of Paula's elopement with Nick Badsky, and the older people shook thick, cracked fore-fingers and smiled. So Anton found but little sympathy among his neighbors whose minds were largely filled with thoughts of other things, among which was the possibility of a strike at the Stove Works.

Of all those about him, the priest alone came to him, and he chiefly from fear that if left to himself, the old man's loneliness might work him ill. He talked much of the church at these times, of God, and His forgiveness; but Anton always shook

his head, and slapped the table vigorously and crossed and recrossed his legs and reiterated: "Never! No one cares! Ah, I show them; half to you; half to the great church."

One day a month later, meeting the priest in the street he said to him: "I go home now to change the will; I think it over; half to you; half to the great church. Remember, when I die; it will be in the drawer." Father Durowsky lifted a hand in half protest but Tschaeche shook his head, saying: "No, I know my business," and shuffled away.

Thus far he had waited—with the patience of his people waiting for Freedom—for some word from Paula. But none had come. In his anger thereat he decided in his mind the plan of revenge that previously he had only mused upon. Her name never again should pass his lips. The priest noted the solemn reticence whenever he referred to Paula, and as time went on, he too, ceased to speak of her.

The affair now had a new interest to the zealous Father. He caught himself wondering how much might accrue to the parish in the event of the old man's death, and reflected happily upon the uses to which a certain sum might well be put.

A window in the church—a memorial window! That might be well; and, too, the Convent across the way needed a new gate. The old one careened

on its hinges sadly. A gate was certainly needed. And so when Anton fell ill late the next winter, the priest had no difficulty at all in picturing the gate already in place and opening toward him proudly, as from his study window he stared across the street through the thickly-falling snow.

The old man's condition necessitated the closing of the shop. This was the day after Mrs. Kolaski, from the back stoop of her abode which faced the alley, perceived his wan face at the window of the little room over the kitchen.

"Sick; are you?" she called.

Anton raised the window with difficulty.

"What?" he piped across.

"Sick; are you?" repeated Mrs. Kolaski.

"Yes—God—sick!" and he banged the window shut.

When the priest came that evening he found the old man fighting with his lungs. Dr. Murkowicz was summoned. He was a little man who always wore a peajacket, and a bushy beard that he parted in the middle, brushing the halves each way. He indulged in an impatient habit of tapping the nail of his left thumb with his shell-rimmed eye-glasses as he talked.

"Bad, bad," he said, after feeling the patient's pulse and taking his temperature. He left medi-

cines, promising to call again the next morning.

Mrs. Kolaski's daughter, Mary, was put in charge of the kitchen where her heavy footfalls on the bare floor were heard in the sick room above. When the doctor left, Father Durowsky pulled a chair to the bedside and sat there in the dim light of the lamp watching Anton's face, occasionally breaking the silence with:

"Are you hot?" or, "Are you cold?"

After a little he began to nod, and his chin dropped on his breast. Anton waited a space, then reached out and clutched at his sleeve. He straightened in his chair, blinking.

"Er—what—er ——" he muttered.

Anton spoke in a rasping whisper. The effort evidently caused him pain, for he lifted a thin hand to his throat.

"In the writing-desk—below," he said, "papers there—bring them."

The priest brought the packet. Tschaeché reached out and turned up the light. The shadows in the corners of the room became thick.

The sick man propped himself against the pillows; his wasted form was outlined harshly beneath the coverlet. His hands were very thin; the nails were darker than the skin, and the purple

veins showed vivid against the general transparency. His eyes were sunken, like his cheeks, though they burned lustrously; and there was a curious twitching of his chin. He separated one paper from the packet and holding it out to the priest said: "Read it."

As Father Durowsky read the lines, written in a cramped, old-fashioned hand, he realized that Anton had kept his word; that none of the money he had saved through long years of suffering was for the girl or for him that she had chosen. There would be quite enough for the gate, he assured himself. The priest gave back the paper with a little mockery of indifference.

"You see; yes?" Tschaeche grinned grimly. "Half for you—half for the great church. Bah! I show them!" The holy man nodded understandingly. And when he left the bedside he carried the papers down-stairs with him at Anton's request, and placed them in the drawer and locked it, dropping the key clinking into the vase. On his way home he loitered a moment at the Convent gate and rattled it, saying: "Yes; a new one; it will be fine."

Dr. Murkowicz called again the next morning and scowled his displeasure at his patient's condition,

"It is pneumonia," he said to Mary in the kitchen, and she ran across the alley to tell her mother.

"Bah!" exclaimed Mrs. Kolaski, "he is just an old man."

"I fear he is dying, really, of loneliness," the doctor said to the priest later in the day.

"Bah!" replied the priest, "he is just an old man."

VII

Three days later Father Durowsky received a letter; and half the night he paced the floor of his bare study to the great wonderment of his old housekeeper.

"We are all alone—my baby and I," the letter said. "What shall we do; will not grandfather take us back? I fear to write him, so am writing you."

The letter ended thus, and when Father Durowsky had read it for the tenth time he tossed it impatiently among the litter on his desk.

The case was very simple. A girl, a parishioner, a sufferer, called to him for aid. Certainly he must respond. And yet—he brought up at the window. Staring across the white street he saw the Convent gate careening comically on its rusted hinges.

The next day he wrote Paula to come, and in-

closed enough money in the letter to pay for the railway ticket. This done he went to Anton's bedside.

The old man was dying. The very air of the room was characterized by that subtle quality that seems always to pervade the atmosphere of a death chamber. Each day for a week he had been sinking, sinking. Even Dr. Murkowicz had given up hope, after much tapping of his left thumb nail with his shell-rimmed eye-glasses.

"They called me too late," he confessed at last to Mary in the kitchen. "If it had been a day sooner." And Mary ran across the alley to tell her mother.

Paula came in the evening of the next day. Father Durowsky met her at the clamorous railway station. Paula held the child close. They drove immediately to the shop, above the door of which the golden sign blinked. In the lower hallway Father Durowsky said: "I have not told him of your coming. I shall prepare him now. It is better. You wait outside the door." Paula followed him up the bare stairs noiselessly.

Listening she heard the voice of the priest; then the door swung open and he beckoned to her.

From where he stood he saw the old man hold out two thin arms and saw the sleeping child placed

upon the bed beside him. His tapering fingers closed around one of the tiny clenched hands, and Paula knelt at the bedside. For a little time there was no sound in the room save the labored breathing of Anton; then he said faintly:

“Go—Paula—the desk—papers.” As she left the room the priest approached the foot of the bed and stood there looking down. Paula’s quick step sounded on the stairs. Tschaeché took the packet and fumbled the papers searching for one in particular. He found it at last and holding it out to her, said:

“Read—aloud.”

In the will that she read, only her name was mentioned, and she was called, “child of my child.” The date of the instrument was seven years before.

The priest’s eyes were fixed upon the face of the dying man and to their question Anton replied:

“Yes—the other—I thought it over. Here. See.” With a miserable effort he raised a book that lay on the table at the head of the bed, and underneath was a little pile of gray ashes.

THE WAGE OF HIS TOIL

The Wage of His Toil

I

WHEN Ladislaw Adamowsky's good woman died—Julia was her name—Ladislaw mourned her death by going across the street and drinking his fill of liquor in the grocery-saloon of his old friend, John Kernafsky. John's sympathy was complete in its appeal to Ladislaw for he, some years before, had lost *his* good woman.

So when he said:

"Yes, I make understand; it means a hole in the house; drink up and another have"—in the eyes of Ladislaw gathered a mist that he brushed away with the back of his hairy hand. And on the day of the funeral, John left Stephen Schlofsky, his clerk, in charge, and accompanied Ladislaw to the church as second mourner. Both were weepily drunk.

Thereafter for a stipulated time—and a stipulated sum—masses were said for the repose of Julia's soul, despite the fact that during her life she had never

shown, so far at least as Ladislav could remember—that she possessed a soul.

For a full month the widower ceased working and mourned in Kernafsky's saloon with his old friend's words of sympathy sounding constantly in his ears. It was at the end of the month that Ladislav gave out, and became unfitted ever to toil again among the little hillocks of black sand in the moulding-room at the Stove Works.

In his day he had been a strong man among other strong men in that dusty moulding-room. There is a memory, that, during the dinner hour on a certain day, he wheeled a barrow piled high with pigs of iron ten times around the room at a jog trot. As though this feat were insufficient to prove his prowess, he then bade Maupin—who was French and came from somewhere across the river—and Lesciwicz seat themselves a-top the load. Each of these carried his two hundred pounds of living flesh and Ladislav's great strength succumbed at last. Strain as he did he could not raise the barrow's legs even so much as an inch above the sanded floor. Still, it was mostly the barrow's fault after all, for, as with a mighty tug the champion brought all his giant strength to bear, the metal handles bent and snapped.

"Ugh!" grunted Ladislav as the great cords on

his neck and the swollen purple veins on his sweaty forehead throbbed and withered.

His sons, Adam and young Ladislaw, who were standing by, laughed outright and nudged each other.

Their father heard and glared; then stooping quickly snatched up a broken bit of heavy casting and flung it at their heads. The boys dodged nimbly and laughed again.

Thereupon the man sat down to his dinner which he ate from a brown imitation-leather lunch-box. The meal consisted of a chunk of black bread and two pink, boiled pigs' feet. The gong clanged presently, and in ten minutes the exploit of Ladislaw was forgotten by his fellows in the moulding-room.

Then came the terrible night when the wire arms shrivelled and the stout legs shrank, and thereafter Ladislaw was different. Once he had been "The Strong." Now he was "The Puny." Some even went so far as to call him "The Man Baby." By these names he was known for a long time. Yet, so far as one could see, the strength was still there; it was as though it slept, merely, in the iron arms and the steel legs.

The sickness came while he sat at supper on a windy March night in the little house that faced the Common.

For a fortnight the weather had been bad; oozy, chuggy underfoot; smudged-gray overhead. At the head of the table, his back to the stove, Ladislav sat; at his right, Adam; at his left the younger boy whom Julia had named for his father. A red cloth having a dirty yellow foliage-design lay awry upon the board. In the centre stood a glass lamp with a rag of red flannel in the bowl. Where, at the foot of the table, properly, had been the mother's place, was a vacant chair. In front of Ladislav stood an open dish piled high with greasy, odorous, fried potatoes. Flanking it was a platter fortified by discs of round, smoked sausage. A glass pitcher half filled with beer that now was stale, stood at the place which had been the woman's, and beside each of the plates was a tall, thick, moulded goblet, heavy and unwieldy. In the father's was a quantity of thin suds.

They ate noisily and generally without speaking. Morsels of food clung to Ladislav's bristly lips. Now and again one or the other of the boys would draw the back of his hand across his mouth with a rasping sound. They took their food as animals take theirs; not because their tongues and palates craved the food but because their sweaty bodies demanded it, somewhat as the fire-box of an engine demands that its maw be filled from time to time,

with coal. The boys used wooden-handled knives, and forks with two "tines" poniard-sharp. Ladislav ate mostly from his hands. Pinning a disc of the sausage to the plate with his left forefinger he would tear away a mouthful, greedily. There was a sort of epic barbarity in the feeding of this man and his sons.

The swirling wind dashed the bony branches of a weazened cherry tree against the panes of the window at the end of the sink. Once Adam got up and flung a double handful of cracked soft coal upon the glowing fire-bed in the sheet-iron stove.

Young Ladislav filled his goblet from the pitcher and drank the beer in two gulps, which exploited occasioned a spasm in his thick, short throat. Pushing back his chair he got upon his feet, lazily. Extending his short arms, the muscles of which tightened and relaxed in the snug sleeves of his blue flannel shirt, he locked his fingers at the back of his head and stretched. His, then, was the ecstasy of a cat after a full meal.

Taking up his coat from the lounge that stood across the end of the room below a lithograph of Admiral Dewey and a colored print of Christ holding in His two frail arms, awkwardly, a tiny lamb—"I'm goin' up th' track t' see if they's any coal," he said.

From a nail at the side of the door he took down a burlap bag that once had held coffee, and rolling it into a wad, tucked it under one arm.

"All yeh kin git," the father advised; "it's cold." And he continued to eat.

When Adam had finished he pushed away his plate, and crossing his arms upon the table, dropped his head upon them, hiding his face. Presently his deep breathing and the sucking noise his father made as he ate, were the only sounds in the hot, odorous room. The wind had subsided somewhat and the bony branches of the weazened cherry tree no longer beat against the window.

II

Adam awoke with a start. Even as he dozed there had penetrated to his brain a strange, new sound. The lamp was burning low. After a dumb moment some of the agony that was in the face of the man at the end of the table was reflected in the boy's, then the blood fled from his lips and a horrid fear smote him. Without shifting his gaze he slid his hand along the cloth until his fingers touched the handle of his knife.

He knew that something was wrong with his father, there at the end of the table. If the working of his jaw meant that he wished to talk why did he

not speak out? It was hot in the room but not hot enough to draw so many glistening globes of sweat as stood out upon his forehead. And his dead-blue eyes were fixed, unwaveringly, upon the rag of red flannel in the glass bowl of the low-burning lamp.

"What's th' matter?" Adam managed to ask.

The man's mouth closed, then opened, and his curled fingers started stiff and straight from the palm of his great hand that lay upon the table.

Fear fled from the boy and a feeling akin to anger took its place. He dropped the knife, and seizing his father by the shoulders, attempted to raise him to his feet. Every wiry muscle in his body tightened.

"Git over there," he shouted, indicating the lounge. He reached to remove his coat, and as he did so the man's bulk slipped from the chair. His legs bent like reeds as he sank to the floor, and a plaintive whine issued from his lips like the whine a dog gives in anticipation of a beating.

Adam dragged the unresisting body to the lounge, and snatching up his coat rushed hatless from the house.

At the railway crossing he met his brother bending beneath the sack of coal.

"Th' old man's sick! Hurry!" Adam cried.

Ladislaw swung the sack around in front of him and lowered it to the ground.

"Huh?"

"Th' old man's sick! I said. He can't talk. I'm goin' fer Dock Polozky. Hurry!"

He helped raise the bag back upon his brother's shoulders, and Ladislaw bent low beneath the load as he ran stumbling along the track.

He was standing in the doorway of the house as Adam and the doctor turned in at the narrow gate. His figure loomed big and black against the yellow light behind him.

"How's he?" Adam asked.

"I dunno; there he is." He turned back into the room.

The physician opened his little black case on a chair and knelt at the sick man's head. Rolling up the coarse sleeve he timed the pulse by a large silver watch.

"One of you hold the light down here," he ordered.

Young Ladislaw obeyed.

"Down here—by his head—there."

Adamowsky's eyes were fixed. His forehead was cold and damp. With his teeth the physician drew the cork from a little phial and poured the contents between the parted lips.

"There," he said, "that'll help some."

The boys had stood by dumbly looking on.

"What's th' matter with 'im?" Ladislaw asked.

"Paralyzed," was the terse reply. "It gits 'em that ways sometimes."

A moment's silence, then —

"Can't he talk any more?" Adam asked curiously.

"Aw, yes, t'-morrow mebbe."

"Can't he walk?"

"Mebbe—mebbe not. If he manages t' git around, he'll have another sooner or later—it'll finish him, prob'ly."

He reached down and pinched one of the man's legs between the knee and the hip.

"See," he said, looking up with a faint smile, "he don't feel that."

The boys stared at each other blankly, then Ladislaw turned away and set the lamp back on the table.

The doctor took up his little black case.

"Let 'im stay where he is," he ordered. "I'll come over t'-morrow morning. Good-night." The door closed. The eyes of the brothers met again, and in each there broke the faint light of a dim, uncertain understanding that what they had seen and what they had experienced marked the beginning of the end of "Ladislaw the Strong."

III

April, treading upon the heels of March, brought spring into the city, and one morning after a night of rain, Ladislaw the Puny shambled across the room and from the front window looked out upon the Common. The patch was living green, so vivid, that a tiny yellow flame seemed to flare in the heart of each grass blade.

He was alone in the house. The Widow Czolgocsky, who, during the early period of his sickness had attended him, was hanging out clothes in her back yard a little way down the muddy street. Ladislaw watched her with a vacant fascination. After a moment, he drew a chair to the window and sitting there, continued to gaze across the Common.

What were Ladislaw Adamowsky's thoughts as he sat at the window beside the door of the little house, staring into the face of spring from eyes half-dead? Did his memory, leaping the chasm of the years, bring back to him some token of his youth in the land, so sore oppressed, that lay across the sea? Perhaps for a moment he was young again, with joy in his heart and thankfulness for the strength that was his; or there may have shone an instant in the clouded store-room of his mind a beam of the light that had leaped from Julia's eyes

as he marched away, a soldier. For he was a soldier, too, in Poland, and would have fought valiantly had they permitted him. But instead, they fed him on prison fare and marched him with many of his fellows, around a paved courtyard that, after a rain, somehow got as muddy as was the street upon which his eyes now were fixed. With infinite labor he lifted a hand and passed it over his eyes, and when he drew it away little beads of moisture gathered and glistened upon his forehead. Into his dull eyes there came a soft light that lingered a moment and was gone. Still he sat there at the window, alone, huddled up, now and then shivering, though not from cold. How often as a lad had he seen the fields at home as vivid in their spring-time dress as was the deserted Common across the way. He breathed deeply and leaning back, closed his eyes.

Down the street there came a cow, swinging her heavy head from side to side; then another, then a herd, driven by a shouting man and a boy, who ran this way and that to keep the animals together. The grass of the Common invited disobedience.

The cows were red, and sleek, and fat. They were all of two minutes in passing the house, and before the last had slipped beyond the range of his tired eyes, Ladislaw Adamowsky had a vision. He

got upon his legs unsteadily and dragged his heavy feet across the room. From the threshold of the back door he stared at a leaning shed. He shambled down the single warped board forming the walk and pulled back the door. Within, the shed was dark and damp.

Here, once, a woman had kept a cow. She had boasted of the "barn" to Ladislav when he bought the house. He remembered having heard the neighbors say the cow "gave liquid gold."

Alderman Gometsky granted her permission to pasture the animal on the Common in summer; in winter she fed it refuse from the brewery.

Gometsky was still Alderman. Indeed, Ladislav, for the moment, could not remember when he had not been. Moreover he knew him. Had he not helped elect him; had he not dropped here and there a word among the sand wheelers in the moulding-room at the Stove Works?

Ladislav Adamowsky rubbed his thin, cold hands together and something like a glint, flared an instant in his eyes, and then went out. He closed the shed-door carefully, and shambled back along the plank to the house.

He took down his hat and coat from a nail at the side of the door, and coiled a strip of flannel around his neck.

Through the thick, black mud of the street he slopped with his dragging gait, and pushed open the door of Kernafsky's saloon across the way.

Kernafsky stood behind the bar polishing a goblet.

He beamed upon Ladislav who until the sickness seized him had often, of an evening, sat at one of the little round tables and spent his nickels; and now, perhaps, Kernafsky speculated, he meant to resume his former custom.

But the beam vanished from Kernafsky's eyes and left them inquiring blankly at the first word his old friend uttered.

"Kernafsky," he said, "what does a cow cost? You used to keep one."

Kernafsky put down the goblet and the cloth, and spreading his fat hands upon the oaken bar, leaned over.

"What?" he exclaimed.

"How much does a cow cost?" The note of seriousness in Adamowsky's tone satisfied the saloon-keeper that the leg-sickness had not flown to the head after all, as he at first had conjectured. He came around from behind the bar and pulled a wooden chair up to the table.

"It depends," he said, thoughtfully, "on th' cow."

Ladislav nodded, soberly.

"Was yeh thinkin' of gittin' one?" Kernafsky inquired.

"Yes."

"Well," Kernafsky speculated, lifting his eyes to the ceiling and slipping a fat forefinger inside his collar, "yeh oughta git a good one fer fifty dollar."

A cloud passed across Ladislav's brow.

"Any cheaper?" he grumbled.

"Now they ain't any use gittin' a cheap one," Kernafsky went on with a livelier interest. He crossed his arms on the table and leaned forward. "A cheap one ain't no good. Don't give no milk t' speak of, an' what she do give ain't no good."

Ladislav stared at a curl of pretzel that lay at the edge of the rubber mat in front of the bar. It was as though he expected any moment to see the morsel turn into a cow.

"Was yeh thinkin' of sellin' th' milk?"

He lifted his eyes. "Yes," he replied, eagerly.

Kernafsky leaned back. "Oh, if that's it," he flaunted, decisively, "git a good one." He became confidential again. "Say," he murmured, "mebbe I kin git yeh one."

Adamowsky shook his head sadly. "I ain't got th' money," he said.

"Ain't th' boys?" Kernafsky coughed.

Adamowsky shook his head slowly. "I dunno."

"Well, there's th' house, ain't it?" Kernafsky suggested. "It's clear, ain't it? Fifty dollars ain't much. Why—why, *I'd* let yeh have fifty dollars on th' house."

Something of the old-time light came back into Ladislaw Adamowsky's eyes as he got upon his feet and held out his hand.

"Git it," he exclaimed. "I got to do somethin'. Th' boys paid the doctor. I got to do somethin'. I could pasture her on th' Common; Gometsky would give me permission. Who'd buy?" He rattled off the names of a dozen among his own people who dwelt in the street. "There's babies too," he added, with a faint smile.

"I'll buy of yeh!"

"Yes, and *you*—I forgot *you*! It'll pay! I'll tell th' boys. I'll fix up th' shed. It won't be hard work. An' I'll keep up th' interes' an' pay all soon. Git it, git th' papers fixed. I'll sign."

Ladislaw dragging his leaden feet across the street was watched by Kernafsky from the window; and when he had disappeared within the cottage, the Samaritan went into the room behind the bar, whence issued shortly his laughter mingled with that of his new, young wife.

At supper that night, Ladislaw explained his

project to the boys. They nodded acquiescence as he unfolded the plan.

"It'll pay," he said.

Adam nodded.

"Th' shed'll do an' Gometsky'll let her feed on th' Common."

"Sure," young Ladislaw agreed.

"An' I kin milk. I guess I ain't forgot. I did once, a long time ago—over there."

By this, they understood he meant the Poland they had never known. "I kin sell it all. I was out this afternoon. More'n ten'll buy right off. It'll pay. Fifty dollars ain't much. Kernafsky knows a cow from a horse. It'll pay."

"Sure, it will," Adam said, and kicked his brother's ankle under the table.

So it was settled.

And when the brothers left the house that night—it was Saturday and the courting season—Adam said to Ladislaw: "Well, what d'yeh think of th' old man peddling milk? It 'ud take him all day t' walk t' th' end of th' block." He laughed.

Ladislaw, the younger replied: "Let 'im do it; le's see—who knows."

IV

Gometsky's grant of pasturage on the Common for his "good friend Adamowsky's cow" was

readily obtained, for the Alderman realized that Ladislaw's condition gave him something of an unusual power among the more superstitious of his neighbors, and who could say when a favor—such as Gometsky's—might not be repaid fourfold?

The cow came on Easter Monday. Her advent was momentous. Ladislaw and Kernafsky constituted the reception committee and were waiting at the narrow gate in the white picket fence. A few women, their arms folded under their aprons, stood about and commented gutturally. Adam and Ladislaw the younger watched from the door-step. To the children in the street the cow was an object of curiosity, and the smaller ones cried at its sullen approach, under the goad of the lad who drove her; but to Ladislaw, she was as some holy thing.

Before five the next morning he had milked the cow for the first time, and an hour later all his customers up and down the narrow street had been furnished with the portions they had ordered, from old Lady Schitski, who, being sick, required no more than half a pint each morning, to Kernafsky, who had asked for two quarts, twice daily.

The bright pails that Ladislaw carried on his rounds represented a cash outlay of eighty-seven cents. For the quart measure he had paid ten

cents; and for the pint cup, five. He dreamed fitful dreams of one day furnishing the milk in neat bottles with disc corks of pasteboard. At the end of the first week he made a computation. To his great surprise he discovered that his labor—and the cow's talent—had netted him two dollars and forty-seven cents, above the cost of the pails and measures. He rejoiced. In the excess of his delight he sought to share it with his sons and it was well that in the wealth of his own joy he did not note their lack of interest.

"It's all right," was the sum of young Ladislaw's comment as he passed out of the house with his brother.

"Well, what yeh think of th' old man now?" Adam asked.

For an instant Ladislaw was silent, then he answered, hotly: "It's a mighty easy way t' git along; easier 'n you 'n' I do."

"Sure 'tis," Adam responded.

Wheeling loads of fine black sand from one end of a long dirty room to the other is not conducive to gentleness; moreover at this particular time young Ladislaw was an acute sufferer from a cardiac ailment that nothing save a nightly meeting with Tilly Lesciwicz seemed to alleviate.

V

So Ladislaw the Puny thrived. Broken of spirit and weak of body, he yet waxed fat of purse. After a month the cow gave half again as much milk as at first, and the debt that stood against Ladislaw Adamowsky on the books of John Kernafsky was lessened by fourteen dollars. Ladislaw bought a new suit for Sundays and a red rocking-chair with black stripes on the spindles and arms. He began to assume a swagger in his weakness. Until now, throughout the period of his illness he had borne himself with rare docility of spirit. But prosperity, so suddenly come, inspired him; now he commanded in his house as was his right. Whenever he cursed, it was with considerable of the vigor that had marked his profanity during the years that he wheeled big men around the moulding-room on a barrow, and broke castings over his knee. His sons had luxuriated in his docility; now they resented his assumption of an earlier authority.

One night Adam said to Ladislaw: "He's an old fool—just you wait——"

"I know it," Ladislaw agreed,—"'jus' let 'im wait."

In the heart of each the bitter weed of revenge had taken root.

It was the girl Tilly who suggested a plan to young Ladislav as they walked together in a silent street one night. It was just after he had asked her to marry him.

"You ain't got nothin'," she said.

"Huh, ain't I?" he flaunted. "I got a hundred an' thirty dollars."

She laughed.

Tilly, who had served a brief period in an American household as kitchen-maid had her own ideas of wealth, and they were broad.

"Why don't *you* keep cows?" she asked, and laughed again.

He wondered if she were "making fun" of him. The veiled reference to his father's feminine employment lacerated his feelings.

"What's th' use?" he said.

"Your father told a man ma knows he was makin' a lot. It's easier 'n wheelin' sand, ain't it? I know scrubbin' pans would be easier 'n workin' in th' fact'ry. You might have two er three, an' git a wagon in time."

He was silent a moment. Finally he said: "I'll tell Adam an' see what he says. Two could do it better 'n one. He's got as much as I have."

"Has he?"

"Yes."

He found his brother in Kernafsky's saloon, for Adam's heart was still his own. They talked in low tones over their beer.

"It'd pay," Adam decided finally.

"'Course it would," Ladislav exclaimed.

"But we ain't got no shed," Adam remarked.

Ladislav's face clouded. "I ain't thought o' that," he said.

"Let's wait 'n' see what happens," Adam suggested, prophetically.

What happened, neither had thought to hope or even dreamed would happen.

One day in the next week the cow ate a quantity of potato leaves smeared with poison that some one had dumped upon the Common. The following morning Ladislav found her dead in the shed, her body cold and stiff. The discovery smote him dumb. Then as little by little a more perfect comprehension dawned upon him, all his little strength ebbed, and he became again a limp, weak, unresisting thing. A woman anxious for her milk, found him lying beside the dead beast in the shed. She cried out to two men who were passing in the street and they came and carried his body into the house and laid it upon the lounge, and the doctor was called a second time.

"It's funny he ain't dead," he said.

He was not to die yet, for the spirit, almost as hard as once had been his steel-like legs, still lived in the cracked shell of Ladislaw Adamowsky's body.

When the power of speech returned to him after three days he mourned aloud the failure of his fortunes as he lay alone on the lounge beneath the gaudy lithograph of the Christ carrying a lamb. Long into the night he lay awake planning.

In the agony that wrenched and racked his soul he confided the existence of the mortgage to his sons. With the recital came a ray of hope to young Ladislaw. The girl Tilly was importuning him, constantly, to "do something for himself," and Adam, still free of heart, shared his zeal. Together they visited Kernafsky.

Yes, he would sell the mortgage. He had taken it in the first place only to help an old friend; and now if the old friend's sons sought to lighten the load that had fallen upon their father's shoulders, of course he would assist. He was frank. Of course he would sell the mortgage. And he did—and added a feather to his nest by the transaction.

The sea of the sons' lives became as glass, and no one rejoiced more in the prospective change of their joint fortunes than the girl whom Ladislaw would wed.

One day, while half in his cups young Ladislav told his father of the bride he intended to bring into the house. The old man fumed and swore weakly. Goaded to the limit of endurance, the boy would have struck him had not some instinct deep within him restrained his arm.

With a curse he cried:

"Whose house d'yeh think this is! It's ours, now. Ask Kernafsky. And if yeh don't like it yeh kin git out!"

Adamowsky started, gasping. He understood; he understood all too well. The boy strode out of the house banging the door behind him. Slowly the first passion subsided in the old man's heart. He lifted his eyes and they encountered the meek gaze of the Nazarene of the picture.

"Oh, God!" he cried, and covering his face with his palsied hands, rocked back and forth.

VI

When Tilly came to reign in the house she did many things. Adamowsky saw his home dismantled little by little. A chair would vanish over night; a shelf would disappear. After a month the changes had been so many that even the memory in him died as long since had died his heart.

Only now and then was he prompted, by some impulse of sentiment, to raise a feeble protest.

"Don't yeh like it?" Tilly always inquired in a tone that conveyed very well the lurking thought that if he did not, it made no difference.

"Oh, yes, but ——" he would manage to say.

"Well then, why don't you shut up?"

At that he would subside and rock back and forth in silence at the window from which he could see the neighbors as they crossed the Common.

If he could only go away, he often thought. But where? To be sure, the great red building with the high brick wall around it, wherein the Little Sisters of the Poor distributed their bounty among a hundred suffering brothers was open to him. But at the thought of going there he shuddered. As a well man he had shuddered in precisely the same way, when, to catch a car that would take him to the Works, he had often, of a crisp morning in the middle of winter stood at the corner of the high brick wall. Once, waiting thus he had seen an old, bent man issue from the gate and come toward him. As he passed, unseeing, Adamowsky noticed that his hands were shockingly knotted and twisted out of all semblance to hands. He looked down at his own when the old man had turned the corner, and curled and stretched his fingers with a

satisfied air. Then he laughed. And now, he, too, could go there if he chose and be of such a company. His chin trembled, and he stared at the carpet where it was worn smooth at his feet. But why should he *not* seek comfort in the great red building? Of what use was he to the boys? All day he only sat in the red rocker with the black stripes on the spindles and arms and rocked back and forth. And yet —

The food that was placed before him thrice daily, he ate without complaint. Tilly's jeers and taunts, at first uttered covertly but now with exquisite candor in his presence, he heard but did not resent.

And then, one night a sudden joy was his, and in the wealth of it he could only think of the wisdom he had shown in not joining the colony that dwelt in the big red building.

It was Adam who, all unconsciously, revived his waning spirits.

"In the spring," he said, "we're goin' t' fix th' shed and buy two cows."

So until the grass on the Common became green again the broken man sat at the window counting the days.

One night in early April they told him that he would be given his food and a dollar a week for driving the cows to and from the Common, and

milking them each morning and evening in the shed.

"Kin yeh do it?" Adam asked.

"Yes, yes," he replied with eager assurance.

So he would work again at last. It was not so bad after all. It might be much worse.

When the barn was finished and the cows came—sleek and fat and red—he went to work joyfully.

Because the neighbor's children laughed at him and mocked him—limping in his wake—he believed that their elders laughed with them. He became morbid. He could have killed the children had he caught them; but they evaded him and kept themselves beyond the reach of his groping hands. But none of the neighbors laughed. Indeed some of them, the eldest among them, sympathized with him in silence, though the greater number only wagged their heads doubtfully and called it the way of youth.

One night after supper the "cow-man," as the children called him now, dragged his leaden feet into the shed. Bedtime came yet he did not appear. Tilly went to the shed to learn the reason. On a bed that he had made of boards beside the cows she found him asleep and tiptoed noiselessly back into the house. Ladislav and Adam looked up from their beer as she entered the room, laughing.

"He's asleep—with the cows," she told them.

Adam chuckled.

"Let 'im stay—if he likes the cows the best," muttered Ladislaw.

VII

The first breeze of scarlet autumn swept down the river from the lake above, and the children fled from the Common. On a chilly day in October Tilly said to the old man:

"You'd better sleep inside from now on; it's cold out there, ain't it?"

"I'm goin' t' git a little oil-stove," he replied. "I seen one in a window."

Tilly flaunted away.

"Well, stay, if yeh want to," she muttered.

At supper she told Ladislaw what his father had said, and the brothers conferred.

"Let 'im freeze then," Ladislaw grumbled.

"He's made his bed," Adam added.

And the stove was installed, and Ladislaw the Puny abided with the sleek, red cows.

It devolved upon him, now that the pasturage was brown, to provide other food for his charges. He negotiated with the manager of the brewery in the next block—a big man with a red, wrinkled neck, the skin on whose cheeks gleamed as though

it had been polished—and arranged that once a month a load of mash from the vats should be unloaded in the alley at the door of the shed. He wheeled the steaming stuff inside, laboriously, and dumped it in a pile at one end of the shed. The illusion of heat afforded by the smoking fodder comforted him when it was very cold; and there developed a sort of intoxication in the air of the place, damp and pungent with the clinging, dizzy odor of the hops and malt.

VIII

Early one morning a tiny Adamowsky came, and later, there was a christening. The festivities lasted long into the night. Around the table within the house a dozen neighbors sat drinking, and so great was the hilarity that no one perceived the face that now and then, for an instant, was pressed against the window pane.

Tilly was late in rising the next morning. In the half light she groped down the narrow stairs to the kitchen. The pails stood beside the door, glimmering dimly in the gray radiance. She stretched across the table and peered at the clock on the shelf. It was long past milking-time, yet the pails glimmering beside the door were empty. She wrapped an old shawl about her head and went out

to the shed. In the corner, where was the wooden bed, the one eye of the little oil-stove glowed. She could not see clearly in the half darkness, and as she started to cross the floor she stumbled; looking down, she shrank back with a scream, and gathering up her skirt fled from the place. At the foot of the stairs in the kitchen she called wildly to the men above. Ladislaw and Adam came clattering down, half dressed, and heavy-eyed.

Tilly seized her husband by the arm.

"Go out—in the shed—and see!" she cried. He pushed her back, and sprang past his brother. At the door of the shed Adam came up with him.

"What's th' matter?" he asked.

Ladislaw did not answer, but flung back the door and they entered together.

In the pale light of the young day they saw the body on the floor beside the pile of steaming mash. The face was upturned and the eyes were fixed.

"He's dead!" ejaculated Adam, and turned away with a wry face.

"He's dead," muttered Ladislaw the younger, whose strength lay in his youth.

DADDY

Daddy

I

SOMEWHERE in the big building a gong clanged harshly; wide doors were flung open, as by magic, and men and women, and boys and girls, flocked into the main corridor, down which they moved hastily. Some of the men drew on their coats as they strode; a few of the women flung their triangular shawls out before them and with an easy dexterity jerked them back over their shoulders and heads; whilst others cautiously thrust pins through their hats. Issuing from the half-light of the corridor the men and women blinked in the brighter radiance of the out-of-doors. Involuntarily they seemed to hesitate on the broad step, then with one accord plunged into the midday. Down the wide gravel walk to the open gate in the high iron fence that surrounded the factory site they shambled. Passing through the gate, their ways took them up the street, down, across.

For the greater part, the older women wore gray shawls over their heads. They held the edges to-

gether at the throat with fingers that were slim, and stained a yellow-brown, as with iodine. The faces, half-hidden by the shawl-folds, told commonplace stories of want, of pinching to make the ends of life meet, and in a few cases, possibly, of hunger. In the faces of those who were not old nor yet young, was pictured the fight that youth was waging for existence. The cheeks of a few of the smaller girls were still ruddy; but their elders' illustrated the ravage that the months would make upon them. A year, two, three, four at the longest, and the hat of cheap tawdriness would give way to the shawl clutched close at the throat by slim, stained fingers. For the most part the faces of the men were like those of the women—pinched, colorless. For they all had been offered and had accepted, according to their lights, the portion of labor which was theirs.

At the corner of the high iron fence gathered a number whose homes were close by. A little, slight old man was speaking. His face was leathery and wrinkled like a frost-bitten apple. Upward from below the top of his collar grew a wisp of tawny beard. His eyes were black and small like shoe-buttons, and his voice was strangely musical.

“Seems if we ought to be able t’ git a few

flowers," he said. His vocal underlining of the word "few" was pathetically melancholy.

"Why, we will," a younger man offered, at the same time drawing from a hip pocket a gnawed black plug of tobacco from which he bit a crescent.

The old man turned to him appealingly. "It wouldn't cost more'n a quarter apiece," he said.

"Oh! Would it cost that much?" another exclaimed.

"Huh! Who can't stand a quarter—only a quarter?" put in a man who till now had had nothing to say. "You're single, Tim, and I guess you can stand it if I kin."

The little old man's eyes twinkled as he asked:

"Ain't you heerd tell about Tim?"

"Aw, shut up!" This from Tim.

"Go on; never mind him; what 'bout him?"

"Why, Tim; he's goin' t' git married—that's why he's so close."

"Th' more fool he," muttered the man who had expressed his willingness to donate.

Tim blushed and fixed his eyes on an apple core that lay at the edge of the walk. "Aw, 'tain't no such thing," he snapped. "What 'bout th' flowers?" he added testily.

"Well," the little old man explained, "I was thinkin' how if only a few of us contributed it 'u'd

take a quarter apiece t' make a showin'; but if everybody'll put in, why 'twon't take but a nickel er a dime at th' most. It 'u'd tickle Daddy mos' t' death. I was talkin' t' my ol' woman 'bout it an' she said ——"

"What's th' matter o' th' girls in Maggie's department?" some one asked.

"Why they'll do su'thin', o' course," the old man replied.

"Then why not all join t'gether? It 'u'd make a finer showin' an' wouldn't cost so much."

"Me'n' my ol' woman was sayin' las' night it might be th' best way."

"Sure, it's th' best way; an' say, Uncle Jerry, you git th' flowers an' see th' others."

"Yes, you do it, Uncle."

"Well, boys, o' course I can't jes' zackly—but th' ol' woman'll be proud to."

"Let'er then. Well, I'm goin' home if it's all settled. I wasted half an hour now."

The group broke and its parts wandered off in different directions; save the man called Tim.

"Here's my quarter, Uncle," he said, holding out the coin. "Take it, no matter what th' others give. It's tough on Daddy—los'n first Maggie's husband, then Maggie—it's blamed tough. Git somethin' pretty, Uncle. Git a piller, er a 'Gates

Ajar,' er somethin' like that, that'll look good. Don't git nothin' that'll look stingy. I'd give a dollar rather'n have you git anythin' that'll look stingy."

"We'll git th' best we kin. I'll see th' girls when they come out t'-night. They's lots been taken on since Maggie left, but I guess th' most of 'em'll be glad t' put in a little."

"I wonder what Daddy'll do with th' kid she's left," Tim ventured. He felt the other's hand on his arm then.

"Ssssssh!" He turned.

A man much older than Uncle Jerry, and a little boy whose hand he held in his were coming across the street. The child tugged at the tethering arm. The high sun of that October day lighted his curls and shone on their golden ripples as they fell over the broad collar of his fresh gingham blouse. The pair slanted away from the couple at the corner; the old man not raising his eyes. Tim, emboldened by the antics of the child, called gently: "Hullo, Charlie!"

"Hullo!" the boy called back.

Tim and Uncle Jerry saw them mount the narrow porch of the little low cottage across the street—one of a neat row that the Brewster Tobacco Company had built for its employees. They entered

and closed the door, from the bell pull of which fluttered a streamer of black, tied with a wide white ribbon.

Tim turned to the old man then and, shaking his head, made a little metallic sound with his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

"It's hard," the other muttered.

Then he pulled himself together. "Well, it's settled, is it?—Me 'n' th' old woman'll make all th' 'rangements."

Tim nodded as he turned away.

A closed carriage had been standing half the morning at the factory gate, and Uncle Jerry, as he passed, chanced to glance into the yard, and saw two men coming slowly down the gravel path. One was Brewster, the president of the company. The other was a stranger. He was a stout man, with a full, beardless face. Across his capacious stomach was spanned from his lower waistcoat pockets a heavy gold chain that caught the sunlight and glinted it. As they approached the gate, Uncle Jerry heard the stranger say: "Well, then, I'll be down about ten to-morrow with the papers. I know how you feel, Brewster, but it can't be helped. It's business, man—it's plain business."

Behind him, Uncle Jerry heard the carriage door slam, then the clatter of the horse's hoofs. He

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glanced back over his shoulder. Brewster was standing beside one of the flower beds that gave the factory yard somewhat the appearance of a park, and staring down at the scarlet blossoms. After a moment he turned and proceeded up the path to the office entrance, his hands clasped behind him.

II

With the full strength of his own combative nature John Brewster loved nothing better than a fair fight, and with all the influence and outer forces at his command, he had for two years, contested hotly the steady advance of the allied tobacco interests of the country in that territory which circumstances had led him to believe was all his own. He felt a sort of divine right in it; a right vouchsafed him by long established precedent. At the first encroachment of the combination he was amazed; later he became bewildered; still later a full realization, a keen understanding of the full meaning of the changed conditions dawned upon him. He saw the fight ahead. When the storm broke he did not retreat. The directors of the Combination were amazed that a single man should have arisen, vain enough to oppose the progress of their great interests. But John Brewster had inherited from his fa-

ther, whom, in the old days, above half a thousand employees were wont, with a certain affection, to call "The Governor," more than the majority of stock in the Brewster Tobacco Company; he had inherited that parent's strong worship of the spirit of independence.

In the undefined philosophy of the elder man had been incorporated the theory of salvation by works, in business as well as in religion. He had believed that as man does, so shall man, in the end, be done by; therefore a fine justice had guided his hand in all affairs of commerce.

When on his death, his son assumed control of the business, the latter mapped out a course of action, such as he believed his father would have approved—expecting certain opposition thereto on the part of the forming combination. He planned no wide departures; rather, he proposed, simply, that the business be advanced to the furthest limit along the straight line his father had drawn, and on which he had expressed a wish, during his last illness, that the conduct of the business might proceed.

After their first amazement, the directors of the Combination smiled at Brewster's hardihood. The case was canvassed, thoroughly. The conclusion was: Kill. How? Either by gradual absorption, or, as a final measure, total annihilation. Owing to

the "sentimental strength" of the western concern, the little group of five men in the East decided that under the circumstances the former was the better means to employ.

But Brewster did not give in.

He saw other companies—some as strong, others weaker, than his own—stumble, totter, and fall—always into the glad, open arms of the Combination. Still he devoutly worshiped at that altar of independence that his father had erected for him. He worked with unabated zeal to make the concern of which he was the head, absolutely impregnable. Yet, even as he toiled he felt the coils drawing tighter, closer, about him. In his own markets the Combination placed a product that was sold below the cost of manufacture. He could not long meet such opposition and continue to stand. During a certain period one-third the output of his factory was given away. In their office the directors of the combination smiled. The sign was good. A business cannot be conducted along the lines of pure philanthropy. Brewster counted on a turn of the tide. A revulsion of popular feeling might be aroused. He placed on all his labels the significant phrase: "Not Made By A Trust." He hung cloth banners on his wagons; furnished little dealers with white streamers on which the same phrase was let-

tered in red. The public noted, shook its head—and bought its tobacco where it could be bought the cheapest.

John Brewster made his last stand. In the great stock room of his factory were many bales of a certain tobacco peculiarly adapted to use in cigarettes. He installed improved machinery. He placed his product on the market. Within a fortnight every dead wall in the territory of his operations carried a great sign advertising a new "pure Virginia" cigarette, "Trust-made," which an eager public might buy at the rate of ten for three cents.

Now the end had come. At his desk this afternoon, as he reviewed the splendid contest he had waged, he became dizzy, and the chair on which he sat seemed sinking, sinking, sinking——

He pulled himself together and a faint smile flitted across his face. A package of his own cigarettes lay before him. He drew one out, rolled it between his fingers, and mused a moment before lighting it. It was a very insignificant thing to have caused so much trouble, very—a mere cylinder of fine rice paper stuffed with a shredded vegetable. Brewster thought how suggestive was the golden color of the cured weed.

The approach of footsteps in the corridor roused him. They stopped at his office door.

"Come in," he called as the knock sounded on his listening ear. The door was pushed back revealing Uncle Jerry who stood looking down and fumbling his hat.

"What is it, Jerry? Did you want to see me particularly?" Brewster asked.

"I did, sir. You see I was walkin' round an' seen you through the window and thought it would be a good time to ask if it'll be possible fer me t' git off t'-morrer."

"Why, Jerry, that is no affair of mine. Why didn't you ask the foreman?"

"Well, sir, you see, what with th' flowers an' all on my mind, I forgot it till it was too late an' jus' remembering you was in here, I thought maybe, if it wasn't askin' too much——"

"'Flowers?' What do you mean by 'flowers'?" Brewster inquired curiously.

"Well, you see, sir, we've been collectin' t' buy 'em fer th' funeral—fer th' funeral o' Daddy Letsky's daughter, Maggie, what's dead——"

"Letsky, Jerry—Letsky?—I don't seem to remember."

It was this interest in his employees that had endeared Brewster to them.

"Oh, yes, you do, sir. Many's th' time Daddy carried you 'round when you was a lad, sir,—no

offense meant, sir. You know him—old Daddy. He uster be inside in your father's day, sir; lately he's been tendin' th' flowers, in th' yard."

"Oh!" Brewster exclaimed with genuine interest. "Why, old Daddy! Of course I know. You see I hadn't heard his name for so long I'd forgotten it. His daughter dead, you say? She never worked here, did she, Jerry?"

"Oh, yes, sir. She was a stripper—up t' a year ago. She ain't been here fer that long—cancer, sir."

An expression of pain crossed Brewster's face. Frequently had that dread disease been named to him.

"Where did they live, Jerry; in one of the cottages?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; th' fourth from th' end, comin' down, sir."

"Ah, I see." Brewster drew a little packet of papers from a pigeon hole in his desk and ran through them. "Yes," he added, separating one, "he has it all paid for. That is lucky."

"Yes, sir," Uncle Jerry interrupted. "But I'm thinkin' they ain't much of it his now, from what he says. First it was Maggie's husband. He worked here too, sir. Same trouble. Then Maggie—an' so much sickness, sir, you know.

Th' place is mortgaged, an' there's th' little feller Maggie left, besides."

Brewster tapped his teeth with the envelope opener.

"An' it's t' be a bit o' comfort to th' ol' man that me an' my woman want t' go t' th' funeral, sir," the petitioner added meekly.

Brewster ceased his little study. "Why, of course, Jerry, go; it will be all right. And Jerry," he called as the old man turned away, "about the flowers; wait a minute." He wrote three lines on a pad and tore off the sheet, slipping it into an envelope which he addressed. "Take that to Sullivan's," he said. "They'll give you all the flowers you want. They're to be charged to me. I wish I had known of this before. I'll see that your being away is all right, Jerry, but be back at five o'clock; the people are to assemble in the main corridor at that time. I shall have notices put up in the morning. There is something very particular I have to say to you. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir, and thank ye, sir, an' God bless ye, sir. I'll see about th' flowers, sir. It'll please Daddy." The old man slipped out noiselessly.

Issuing from his office a few moments later Brewster stood, for a brief space, on the wide steps. He drew on his gloves. At the gate he turned and

looked back at the building. The black windows caught the reflection of the lights in the street and to him, standing there, they glared like so many angry eyes.

III

At five minutes after five the next afternoon the main corridor of the factory was crowded. The throng faced the broad main entrance at the right of which, as one entered, the door of the president's private office stood ajar. The door of the general offices directly opposite was likewise open, and beyond, the craning crowd in the hallway saw many young men with their coats off. There were only a few women in the front rank, and all of them were flattened against the wall, down either side, as far as the doors of the offices. The younger men stood at the front mostly, a few squatting on their heels. In the middle of the thin row of women on one side stood Daddy Letsky, the child directly in front of him, snug against his body. At his side was Uncle Jerry.

They had come direct from the cemetery. The old man's eyes were still red and from time to time he sniffled. He wore, with a marked air of discomfort, a suit of black cassimere that shone somewhat in the brilliancy of the arc light that sputtered over the heads of the throng. The child regarded the

assemblage with patient curiosity. He held his little flat hat over his stomach and his grandfather's hands rested on his golden head.

"Why don't th' show begin?" called some wit from the back. There was a nervous laugh.

"Shure an' 'twill be show enough ye'll be afther havin' befure yer t'rough, me bucko," a brawny Irish woman flung back. Another laugh followed this sally.

A woman perceiving Daddy and the child, whispered hoarsely to her elbow neighbor:

"They buried his Maggie t'-day."

The word was passed along, and the old man became an object of decided interest on the part of several of the women.

"'Tis th' child she left," said one who stood directly opposite him, but he made no sign that he heard, and continued to stare down at the golden hair of the child through which he ran his fingers absently.

"Maybe it's politics," Uncle Jerry muttered. Daddy nodded.

The door of the president's private office opened and Brewster regarded the throng from the threshold. Behind him, sitting at the desk, Uncle Jerry glimpsed the stranger whom he had seen in the yard the day before.

Brewster brought a chair into the corridor, which he placed directly beneath the sputtering electric light. A sigh escaped the crowd, a sigh of relief after the period of inactive waiting.

"Friends," he began. There was an uneasy shifting on the part of several in the heart of the throng.

"Friends, you've probably been wondering why I wanted you to assemble here this afternoon. I have something particular to say to you. I have an announcement to make. It is one that will affect you all; that's why I wanted you surely to be here. I guess you all are, from the size of the crowd."

"That's what!" a voice piped. In the general laughter Brewster did not join. He brushed the back of his hand across his forehead and fingered his handkerchief nervously.

"And what I've to say, friends, is this," he continued, in calm, even tones: "at noon to-day the Brewster Tobacco Company passed out of existence." He paused. The men and women exchanged glances with varying expressions of surprise. Across the faces on which the light shone most strongly swept faint, sick smiles. The eyes of Uncle Jerry and Daddy Letsky met.

"We've made a long and honest attempt to go it alone, friends," Brewster resumed; "but we've

failed. This whole plant, building, machinery, stock, even our trade-marks have been taken up by the United States Tobacco Company."

"Th' Thrust—I knew ut!" hoarsely muttered the brawny Irish woman whose sally a few moments before had occasioned laughter.

"Th' Trust! Th' Trust!" Brewster heard the words hissed at him from three sides.

"Th' business 'll go on just th' same, won't it?" called a strong masculine voice from the rear.

Brewster's tone was less even as he replied:

"That is the question it hurts me to answer, friends; I can't tell how it hurts me. This factory will be abandoned. Our goods are to be manufactured everywhere—all over the country, in the scores of other establishments the—the combined tobacco interests of America control. I can't——"

There ensued a commotion in the heart of the crowd.

"What's th' matter?" some one cried.

"Can't ye see?"

"It's Jane Coombs—she's fainted."

"Git back—give her air—can't yeh!"

"Hold her head up!"

"Th' side door's open, Billy—carry her out that way!"

"She'd no business workin'—her in her condition!" It was a woman who said this.

"But her man's sick these eight months."

"Shut up! Go on, Mr. Brewster," some one called impatiently.

Brewster started to speak and coughed.

"Friends," he said after a moment, "I'm sorry. I know how hard it will be for many of you not to come here each morning; many of you knew my father. I'm sorry; but with so many other factories in town, you'll all get work, surely." He hesitated and looked about him, helplessly.

His eyes chanced to meet Uncle Jerry's.

"D'ye mean, Mr. Brewster," the latter asked weakly, "that we're all out o' jobs?" Several in the front rank heard the question, and hung breathlessly upon the answer. One was a woman who carried her gray shawl over one arm, as a waiter carries a napkin. She craned forward, her head cocked to one side.

"I'm afraid that's what it means, but ——"

"Oh my God!"

The woman sank half to her knees. A man behind her caught her, and supported her. She wailed miserably as he led her back through the crowd that parted, leaving a path open.

Not till now had there dawned upon the workers

any definite realization of what all this meant, but now ensued eager whispering among them, much wagging of heads, brave shrugs of shoulders and a curse or two. A few of the younger girls began to cry softly.

"Where you goin'?" one man shouted to another.

"I'm goin' t' look fer another job; what's th' use hangin' 'round here," was the jaunty reply, and heavy footfalls echoed from the transverse corridor.

"There, there!" Brewster called out. "Don't take on so, people. Why, you'll all get jobs. Don't take on so. Every factory in town needs help. You'll all get jobs. Better'n you've had here, likely."

The man who, from the chair at the President's desk had listened unmoved, rose, now, and approached the door. Brewster saw him. A look of immense relief came into his face.

"Friends," he called, "here's Mr. Jamison, the Vice President of the Combination. He has a few words to say to you." He turned, as the other came into the corridor.

"For God's sake tell them something to make it easier," he muttered. "Tell them anything. Don't let them go on like that." He entered his office and closed the door.



Jamison advanced, smiling blandly.

A single feeble hiss, then perfect silence.

"I don't think there's anything I can say. This factory's been absorbed by the United States Tobacco Company, and will be abandoned, for the time being. I don't think there's anything else."

He hesitated as though expecting some reply.

"Do th' houses go, too?" a shrill voice piped.

"Yes, except those that are paid for, of course."

"When do we quit?" It was a lustier masculine voice that flung this question over the heads in front.

"Saturday—to-morrow night."

"Oh! Oh! Less'n a day's notice!"

"But we may resume operations here," Jamison hastily added, "after a year; till then there'll be no more work."

He turned on his heel and vanished into the private office.

"Well," he said. Brewster looked up.

"Why, what's the matter; you look as though you'd seen a ghost."

Brewster turned to the window. He heard the movements of the throng in the hall. But one man, thus far, had gone. Little groups had formed and there rose a hum of subdued conversation.

"Why don't they go?" Jamison asked.

Brewster went out into the corridor again and at his appearance the hum subsided at once.

"Go home now, friends," he ordered, "go home now—and don't worry." He saw them move away, singly and in little groups. Uncle Jerry had wanted another word, but in the excitement had sacrificed it to accompany his old friend to his silent home across the street. Brewster waited in the corridor till the last had gone, then turned back to his office. He sank into his chair as one who was very tired, physically.

"Well, what are you going to do, now that it's over?" Jamison asked, irrelevantly, after a moment of silence. "Better take a run down to New York with me, hadn't you?"

"No, I think not, thank you. I'm off for California shortly. I think it's time for me to take a vacation. I haven't had one in seven years."

Brewster refused an invitation to dinner, saying:

"I've a good deal to do, and shall stay on for an hour."

Jamison rose and buttoned his coat comfortably.

"I shall see you in the morning. Good-night," he said.

The outer door closed with a slam.

IV

After mass on Sunday, Daddy brought a chair out on the narrow porch of the cottage and sat there rocking. From time to time he inspected his great silver watch. Mrs. McGuire, with whom he and Charley boarded now, had sent Timmy over to say that dinner would be ready shortly after noon, as she and Patrick had planned to go to the cemetery in the afternoon. On the porch at the old man's feet lay a crumpled copy of *The Polish Star*. He could read English but clung tenaciously to the journal of his people quite satisfied with its meagre reports of local occurrences. He had just finished reading a column account of the closing of the factory, in which the vehement writer saw fit to congratulate his readers that so few of them would suffer from the abandonment of the plant.

In the narrow yard between the porch and the white picket fence Charley was playing with a huge red rubber-ball bright with orange stripes. Daddy watched him absently.

Uncle Jerry, in passing, stopped at the gate for the morning's word.

"Was yeh t' mass?" he asked. Religion afforded them a common ground.

"Yes."

Jerry's church was St. Patrick's; Daddy's, St. Albertus.

"I wasn't," the man at the gate explained; "th' woman ain't feelin' well.—'Twill do next Sunday. Have yeh heard anythin'?" This cautiously.

Daddy shook his head.

The child ran to Uncle Jerry holding out the ball.

"See! See!" he cried.

"Ah ha, 'tis a fine ball," the old man exclaimed, grinning down into the little face, about which the golden curls clung lovingly.

"McGuire's woman thinks a heap of th' child," he said.

"Yes."

"Does yer paper say anythin' 'bout 'em openin'?"

Daddy shook his head.

"Have yeh any idee what ye'll turn yer hand t'?"

Daddy shrugged his shoulders. "Haven't had time t' think," he said, and a smile hovered an instant about his mouth.

"Oh, well!" Jerry exclaimed, straightening. "Yeh hev th' house; 'twill not be of a roof lackin', anyway."

"I think I go 'round to the other places Monday and see if anything is t' do," was the reply. "Do som'thing anyway." His eyes lingered lovingly on

the child who was bounding the ball on the narrow walk.

"Of course," Jerry said. "Of course yeh will—ye'll git suthin'." He turned away. "Sure—lemme know," he called back over his shoulder, encouragingly.

But to his wife at dinner, Uncle Jerry observed: "I don't know what he'll be able t' do f'r hisself an' th' boy."

The woman made no reply, but glanced proudly from one side of the table to the other, at her strong sons, both of whom, as machinists, were employed in the car shops, and she was grateful, without knowing it.

The following morning Daddy was pottering about the flower-beds in the factory yard, as usual, when Brewster turned in at the gate. The latter saw the old man coming across the wide grass plot towards him, and waited on the walk.

"Is there anything you want, Daddy?" he asked.

Letsky pulled off his hat, and fumbled it. "Yes, sir, I thank for the flowers that was for Maggie," he said.

"Oh, that's all right." Brewster reached out and laid a hand upon his shoulder as he stood there looking down at his hat. "Have you decided what you'll do, Daddy?" he asked.

"No, sir." The old man raised his head and their eyes met. "That's what I wanted t' see about. I been here a long time, Mister Brewster,—long time.—Your father—I work for him—you was little feller—so high."

"Oh, well, you'll get something to do, Daddy," Brewster exclaimed impatiently. "Why, you're as strong as lots of younger men. You own your own home and ——"

"Ah, no,—not so." The old man shook his head, and his faint smile was apology for the contradiction. "I own it not."

"It isn't mortgaged, Daddy?" Brewster exclaimed.

"Yes—sick—Maggie's man—then Maggie—all mortgaged—all." He flung out his arms helplessly.

"Can't you pay it off?"

A shrug was the reply. "It's due by the first o' the mont'—all gone—all. I had one hundred an' ten dollars in th' bank—but Maggie's funeral—an' th' mass—seventy dollars—there is nothing left—not much—all that for board for Charley an me."

"Charley. Have you got a son?" Brewster exclaimed.

The old man smiled. "No," he said. "Mag-

gie's. Charley! Charley!" he called, turning and looking about. The child came from behind a smoke tree hugging his rubber ball.

"Well, well!" Brewster muttered; then he squatted on his heels and called: "Come here, Charley—come and shake hands with me."

The boy advanced slowly, glancing from Brewster to his grandfather, cautiously.

"Come—shake hands with me."

He held out one of his little hands. Brewster barely felt it, tiny and warm, within his own palm, before it was quickly withdrawn, and its owner snuggled close to his grandfather, who patted the top of his flat cap, tenderly.

"Maggie's boy," he muttered, as though to himself.

Brewster stood up. "Well, Daddy," he said, "you come into my office at five o'clock this afternoon. I shall be busy until then. I'll see what we can do for you. We'll have to get rid of that mortgage some way," he added.

The old man nodded. His eyes followed Brewster's powerful figure until it disappeared beyond the wide swinging-doors.

"Go play," he ordered the child, who, glad of the command, straightway ran across the yard to fling his rubber ball against the smoke tree.

V

Brewster was examining a pile of papers when Daddy entered his office that afternoon.

"Ah, here you are!" he exclaimed. He reached to a particular pigeon-hole. "I've written notes to the managers of the other factories in town," he said. "You'll see whom they are to; there's Green of the Sun Company, Thurber of the Globe, and Thompson of the Navy Company. I've written them personally, Daddy; and told them what you used to do inside, but that you are handy with tools, and know flowers, and can do almost anything." He smiled. "You'll get something, and if you don't, why, just come to me again. I shan't be here after to-day, but you know where I live; come right to the house; will you?"

"Yes, sir." The old man held out his hand for the envelopes and stowed them away carefully in the breast-pocket of his faded brown coat.

A little group of former employees stood at the gate as he issued from the building. He did not join them, but passed, without speaking, and crossed the road to the cottage of Patrick McGuire, where Charley was.

VI

The factory of the Sun Tobacco Company was on Fifth Street, almost two miles across town.

Letsky walked. The boy at the big door was officious.

"Yeh lookin' fer a job?" he asked.

The old man nodded.

"What d'partmint?"

Daddy shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"Ainy," he said.

The boy smiled patronizingly. "Yeh'll hev t' see th' superintendent," he said. "He ain't here."

The old man had been fumbling in his pocket and now drew out three envelopes, one of which he gave the boy, who, noting the address, ceased his patronage and became odiously meek.

"Oh, yeh want to see Mister Green? I'll show yeh. He's right down 't th' end o' th' hall."

Letsky followed.

"That's him—th' one at th' desk by th' window."

Daddy perceived the person designated through the glass panel of the door.

He nodded and entered.

Green, of the Sun Tobacco Company, had gained a reputation which he deemed it his religious duty to live up to. He was a dried-up little man, with no eyebrows and with squinting eyes. His face was the color of a light grade of tobacco leaf. He scowled perpetually.

"Well?"

Letsky gave him the letter. He drew it from the envelope with a little gesture of annoyance, and scanned it swiftly. Then his eyes swept the bent figure of the petitioner and he said with a snap:

"There's nothing open. I'll keep the note. When there's anything, I'll let you know. Good-morning."

The dismissal was so swift that the old man stood an instant blinking after it had been given.

"Is there anything else?"

He mumbled something and turned away.

"Did yeh see him?" asked the officious boy at the door.

"Yes;" and the shadow of a smile swept again across his wan face and was gone.

The factory of the Navy Company was not far away. Letsky had passed it many times with Maggie on their way to the cemetery where her husband was buried. He had frequently compared it disparagingly to the larger establishment of the Brewster Company. It had no great yard, no flower-beds. Its red brick walls rose flush with the narrow stone sidewalk. The basement windows and those of the first story were barred, giving it somewhat the appearance of a prison or an asylum. There was no boy at the entrance, and the old man entered the corridor helplessly. The doors on

either side were half glass. He glanced through them into great rooms cut up with railings and filled with clerks. The pounding of machinery, the click of many typewriters, the perceptible motion of the floor, combined to make him dizzy. He leaned against the wall and drew the back of his hand across his eyes. Just then a door down the corridor opened and a man came towards him.

"What's the matter ; you sick ?" he asked.
"What do you want ?"

"Mister Thompson, is he here ?" Letsky inquired faintly.

"What do you want to see him for ?"

"I've got a letter." He fumbled for his pocket.

"Wait a minute; I'll see."

The man was gone a very long time, Daddy thought, but at last returned.

"He's not here," he said; "he's in St. Louis; went this morning; he won't be back till Monday. Do you want t' leave your letter ?"

Daddy glanced from the envelope in his hand to the face of the man. The smile he saw there was reassuring.

"I guess you'd better leave it and come again Monday; I'll see he gets it."

Letsky's doubts were thoroughly dispelled by the kind note in the man's voice.

"You give it to him," he said. "Say I come Monday—sure—heh?"

"Yes, I'll see that he gets it."

Then he vanished. The old man hesitated a moment, tempted to run after him and demand the letter that might mean so much to him and to Maggie's child. On second thought he shrugged his shoulders at his own misgivings and went away.

The walk from the cottage had been long and he was very tired. The sun was high in the sky, so he did not hurry. Some men were repairing a gas main in the street at a crossing and he stopped to watch them. They had cut the asphalt evenly and piled the squares on the curbing. It was hard digging in the concrete, and frequently the pavers cursed. Once when the biggest of them uttered a coarse oath, Daddy laughed outright. The curser glowered at him and snarled:

"What yeh laffin' at?"

"Nothin'," was the meek reply as Daddy walked away.

Two blocks further on he stopped again. An Italian with a barrel organ and a monkey was grinding out discordant melodies. Around him was a crescent of little children, who seemed to care less for the music than for the absurd monkey

in his filthy red satin coat, green breeches, and yellow cap with a tassel on it. The Italian guided the monkey by a string which now and then he slackened so that the little animal leaped forward, and the group of children broke and fell back, screaming. It was very amusing. The organist caught the old man's eye, and held out his hand, appealingly. Daddy shook his head and walked away.

As he was about to cross the street in front of the McGuire cottage, a funeral procession turned the corner, and he drew back for it to pass. It was a long procession. As one by one, the coupé at the head, the hearse, the closed carriages of the mourners, and all the rest moved slowly by, he stared up at the drivers on their high seats. One who wore a very shiny hat with a ridiculous cockade on one side, and whose lap blanket was wrapped tightly about him almost to his arm pits, made a wry face at the staring old man on the curb. Daddy gazed after that driver until the last carriage of the procession had passed. He walked across the street unsteadily. Mrs. McGuire saw him from a window of the cottage and called to him from the door that dinner was ready. Charley came running down the walk to meet him, hugging his red rubber ball with the orange stripes.

"Ah," the old man cried, "all clean." He made a lunge at the little chap who dodged, circled him, and came around on the other side.

In the doorway Mrs. McGuire beamed. "Ain't he a darlin'!" she exclaimed.

VII

All the afternoon Daddy pottered among the flower-beds in the factory yard. Charley played with the ball on the lawn. There was nothing for the old man to do, but nevertheless he dug with his little trowel, evened the earth away, and trimmed the grass at the edge of the beds with a clicking pair of heavy shears. After supper he sat on the porch of the cottage. A few men whom he knew nodded as they passed and flung him a word, but none stopped.

In the morning, as he was about to set out for the Globe factory, across the city, a covered buggy drawn by a sleek bay horse stopped in front of the cottage, and a man thrust his head past the canopy and called:

"Letsky, come here!"

The old man's heart beat wildly as he approached the carriage.

"What is it?" he asked, his face pale, a little scowl around his eyes.

"I was drivin' by and thought I'd ask if you'd got anything to do yet."

Daddy shook his head.

"No, but I will!" he muttered.

"Where?"

"At the Globe place."

"Oh, you got a job, then, eh?"

Daddy had lied.

"There won't be any trouble about the payment, then; it would be too bad if you lost th' property just now. Well, I'm glad you got a place, Letsky. So long!"

He clucked to the horse. Daddy gazed after the carriage until it swept around a corner far up the street; then he set off bravely across the city.

Alfred Thurber, manager of the Globe Tobacco Company, was another man who had gained a reputation which he strived to live up to. He was a large man, with a kindly face and a gentle voice. Daddy thought he had never heard a gentler voice than that with which Thurber spoke to him this morning. He had read the letter. Its deep underlying meaning he understood thoroughly, and the pathos behind it touched him. He folded the note carefully and slipped it back in the envelope.

"I'm sorry," he said, looking up into the old eyes bent so eagerly to his, "but I don't believe there's

anything around the plant we could put you to. You see this is a bad time of the year," he went on. "We are full up. Instead of taking on anybody else we are letting a few go."

"I tended the flowers by the Brewster company; have you no flowers here?"

Thurber smiled. "No," he replied, with a little cough, "I am sorry to say, we have no flowers. This is just a tobacco factory. But I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll keep your name and address, and around the first of the year I've no doubt I can do something for you. Will that be all right?" He smiled blandly.

Daddy nodded and quite mechanically spoke his name and the street number of his little cottage.

"No flowers!" he muttered, more to himself than to the man at the desk—"No flowers!"

"No, no flowers," was the reply. "But about the first of the year I'll see if I can't make a place for you."

Thurber followed the bent figure with his eyes as it moved towards the door. He placed the slip whereon he had written the address in a pigeon hole of his desk.

The three chances had resolved themselves, now, into one. And that chance could not be taken until Monday. The Navy Company was a large concern;

it employed possibly eight hundred men and women. Still it was an especially bad season. If he should fail there too it would not be quite the last, for Mr. Brewster was left. Had he not said, "See me—come to my house"? It might not be charity even then. Letsky easily estimated the amount there would be to his credit in the bank after the expenses of Maggie's funeral were paid. So, on Monday he would go back to the Navy factory; till then he could only hope.

Each day, save on Sunday, he potted about among the flowers, and on Sunday he took Charley for a long street-car ride across the city to the cemetery. It was a brilliant afternoon, soft, June-like. For a long time the old man and the child sat on a rustic bench and watched the passers-by in the winding ways of the City of the Dead. Flowers were everywhere. In another part of the great, uneven, white-marked field, a military funeral was in progress, and on the wings of the warm breeze was borne to them the sound of dreary music. The child became drowsy and leaning his head against the old man's breast fell asleep. Busy with their dead, those about had no eyes, no words, no time for these two, living. The child slept on, the old man's protecting arm across his shoulders, holding him close to his own

frail body. Until almost sunset they sat thus on the rustic bench, and then the child awoke saying he was cold, and the grandfather, taking his hand, led the way out of the cemetery into the streets, where the cars rushed by and the gongs clanged, and all was life.

The next morning Charley asked to go with him on his search for work, and after much begging Daddy consented. It would mean the street-car again; whereas if alone, he would walk; but the eagerness of the child touched him, and they set off together.

Daddy led the way down the long corridor of the factory to the door at the end through which the stranger had vanished with his letter a week before. He scanned the faces through the glass. He turned the knob carefully and entered the room. A row of little windows rose on his right and through one of these he heard a voice ask:

"Who do you want to see?"

He put his face close to the arch.

"That man by the corner," he said. The clerk turned, called, and Daddy saw his friend come forward.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "You want to see Mr. Thompson, do you? All right. I gave him your letter. Just wait a minute and I'll find out if he's busy."

He was not gone so long as before. "This way," he called from a doorway.

Charley tugged at his grandfather's hand, frightened by the strangeness of the place. The manager wheeled in his chair as the little old man and the child approached.

"I got the letter," the manager said at once. "I've been thinking it over. Now, I'll be frank, Mr.—Mr."—he referred to the note which he held in his hand, "Mr. Letsky. There's nothing we can do for you here. The fact is you are too old for this business. Why don't you try to get something else? I would do almost any favor for Mr. Brewster, and his interest in your case is very kind of him, but if I should put you in here it would merely be for charity; you wouldn't like that. Now go out and look for something else; you know about flowers. Try to get something to do in a greenhouse. If I knew anybody in that business I'd do my best for you. You tell Mr. Brewster that, and maybe he'll see a way to fix you. That's what you ought to do; a greenhouse would be just the place. Sorry; but I haven't a thing."

The child had gazed open-mouthed at the man in the chair, but now as he held out a hand to him, he drew back.

"Not yours?" Thompson suggested tensely.

"No—my Maggie's—my girl's."

"Ah, yes, I see—a fine boy—a very fine boy. Well," he added, straightening in his chair and lifting his eyes from the child's face to the old man's, "I'm sorry, but that is all I can say—very sorry. You explain it to Mr. Brewster, will you?"

Daddy nodded. "Come, Charley," he said. He took the child's hand in his, and they passed out of the office through the reception room and into the corridor. As they rode back in the car, Charley interested himself in the flying panorama of the city streets, for his grandfather did not speak.

"Well," said McGuire that night at supper, "how'd yeh come out?"

"Nothin'," was the terse reply. The McGuire boys glanced at each other across the table; McGuire had obtained a job, and was complacent.

"It's a shame!" he exclaimed. "What'll yeh do?"

"I go to Mr. Brewster's house t'-night; he told me so."

"That's good; he'll git yeh suthin' sum'ers," McGuire assured.

Letsky realized, not keenly, but with a certain numbness, how hollow were the forms he had witnessed. He brought no consoling philosophy into his review of his position. They told him he

was too old. He knew the dexterity that once had been his still was his, despite his years. He might say it was however, but those to whom he spoke only laughed, and would give him no chance to prove the truth of his assertion. With a feeling in his heart akin to hatred for all God's work, he mounted the broad steps that led to the oaken door of the old Brewster home that night. He fumbled for the bell; his finger pressed a little button; somewhere within he heard a faint tinkle. He waited, hopelessly. The door was opened the length of the chain-guard, and he peered into a woman's face.

"Mister Brewster!" he muttered. "I come t' see him—Letsky—tell him Letsky."

"I'll be doin' nuthin' of th' sort!" the woman exclaimed.

He stared at her slanted face stupidly.

"He tell me to come," he insisted.

"He ain't here," she snapped.

"When'll he come?"

"Shure, an' Oi've no idee; he's gone to Californy. He lift lasht night; mebbe three months; he ain't bin well all summer; th' doctor told him t' go. Is that all?"

He was backing away.

"Luk out thayre!" the woman cried fearfully, "ye'll be afther steppin' off."

He turned, looked down at the steps, and descended them without speaking.

"Shure an' he acts loike he wor fuller'n a tick!" the woman muttered.

She unfastened the chain, and opening the door, came out on the porch. In the light of the electric lamp that swung above the street in front of the house, the man's bent figure was clearly outlined. She watched it curiously until it became one with the darkness beyond; then she went back into the hallway and closed the door and made it fast with much rattling of the chain.

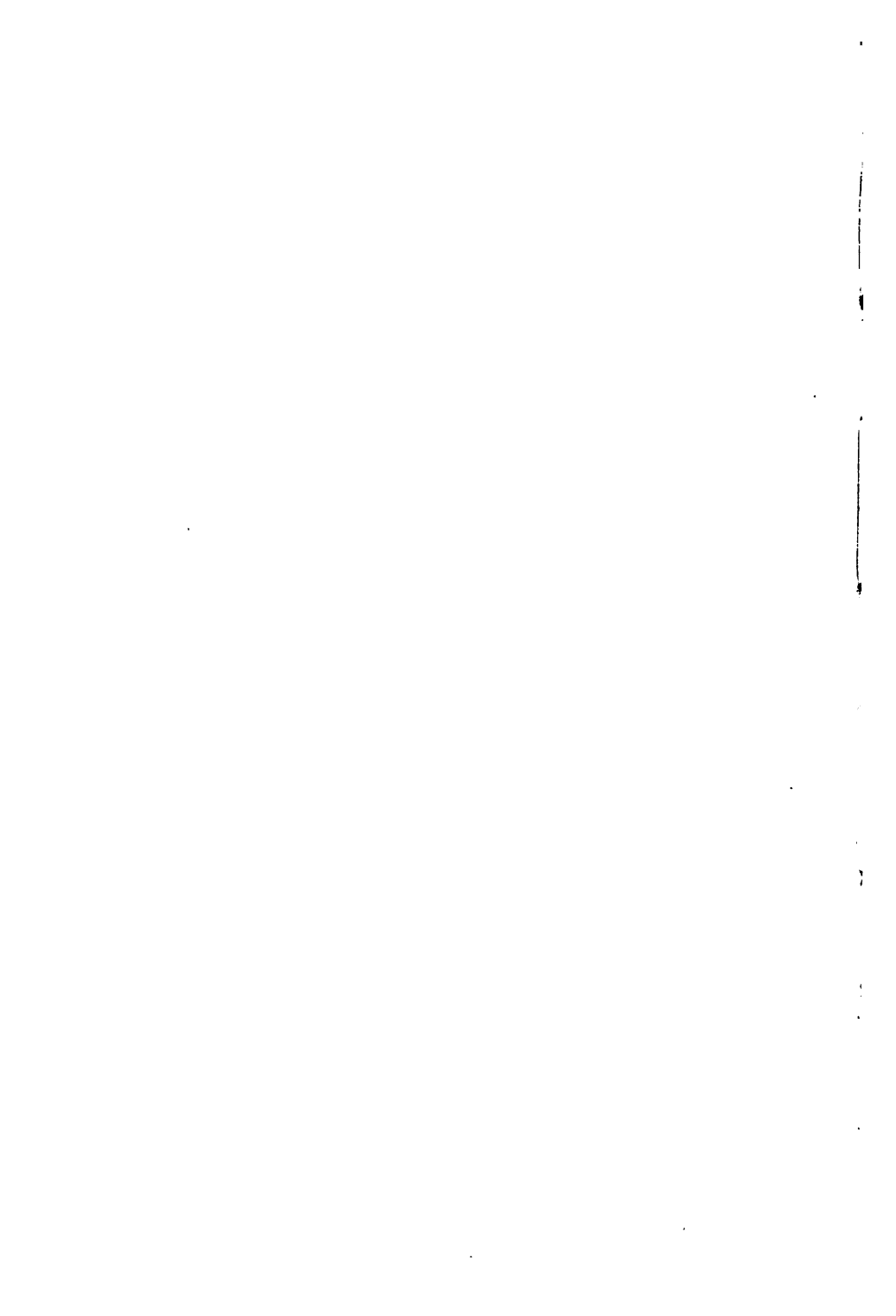
VIII

Overhead myriad stars glittered like white gems on the purple robe of night.

From the open windows of the Cathedral surged a volume of sound; the deep melody of an organ and the thin harmony of young voices.

The old man pushed back the door and entered. Here at least he was at home. The music rose higher and higher. It was as though he himself were lifted by it and borne aloft. Hope dying within him he raised his eyes, but even the face of his God into which he would have gazed, adoring, seemed turned from him. A weakness seized him, and he sank upon his knees. In a burst of harmony the anthem ended.

THE DAY OF THE GAME



The Day of the Game

I

FOR an instant a hush that was more than a hush enveloped the grand stand, the crowded veranda of the Athletic Club, and the bleachers opposite. And then, as though by a silent signal, the immense throng rose upon its feet, and with ragged cheers, broke through or leaped the boundary ropes, and bore down the field, a tidal wave of shrieking youth that the police could not control.

The girls on the veranda, inspired by the ecstasy of their companions, cried shrilly, and wildly waved their handkerchiefs and the little flags they carried. Many were left standing there to cheer alone, while their escorts joined the surging mob that swept upon the dirty-gray, padded and masked Olympians at the further goal.

No one seemed to pay the least attention to the Cornell giants as laggingly they came up the field close to the ropes, and slipped silently into the dressing-room, disconsolate in their defeat, their chins upon their breasts, their eyes upon the ground.

And, as the girls left on the veranda to care for themselves, watched, they saw eleven stuffed figures lifted in the air to ready shoulders which bent beneath their weight and thus the strange procession of triumph and of noise came up the field.

Above the heads of the moving mass of young humanity canes were waved stiffly. Hats, torn and broken, were flung about the field. In the riot of joy each man sought to shout louder, wave higher, and leap further than his brother, so great was the delight the triumph of the team occasioned among them all. The little boys clinging in the trees and clustered on the electric towers outside the fence, cheered with the mob in the field and were glad likewise. The men in blue, waiting beside their cars in the street, just beyond the gate, grinned at one another intelligently, as roar after roar ascended to the turquoise sky that domed the gridiron.

On came the throng, running, bending, stumbling, while the cheers of the flushed girls on the clubhouse veranda rose shrilly above the deeper-throated masculine yells. The victors, dirty beyond measure, plastered with the brown, clinging mud in which they had so valiantly wallowed for a good two hours—a splendid contest for the honor of the colors on their stockings—rode their fellows' shoulders uncomfortably, as the crowd, shapeless, soul-

less, and cheering lustily, seethed and surged across the field. One of them, to save himself from falling, clutched wildly at the long hair of the bareheaded youth beneath him; another planted a heavy heel unwittingly in a second bearer's mouth, and the youth wrenched free and ran up the field sopping his bloody lips, but turning each tenth step to wave his reddened handkerchief and yell.

It was such a scene as might have been witnessed by Grecian maidens in the stadium of old, when other young giants, the distant ancestors of these borne now in triumph, were themselves carried, as loftily, as triumphantly, down the course.

The shouting continued so vigorously that it shook the windows of the narrow, low-ceiled, suffocating room where other youths, the vanquished, were peeling the garments of the battle, and silently rubbing their smooth, pink bodies with wide, coarse towels.

The eyes of every girl above were turned down the field and all were alight; each soft cheek glowed with ruddy color, every nerve was tense.

Among these now subdued spectators was one who had not cheered, but whose excitement had been none the less great, as testified to by the eagerness with which she leaned over the veranda rail,

her cheeks white from the pressure of her slim fingers against them.

Now, apparently oblivious to her immediate surroundings, her attitude unchanged, she watched every swerve of the throng as little by little, and unsteadily, it approached. As the human maelstrom swept on and the stuffed shapes outlined so ridiculously against the sky became distinguishable, one from another, the girl smiled and leaned further over the rail. Another instant and she saw but one figure among the many—Adams'. He sat higher than the others; was more conspicuous among them. Again and again, that afternoon, she had seen him seize the ball and, plunging, forge down the field, clasp-ing it closely to his breast. Once she had seen him flung heavily to the ground by a low tackle and had held her breath when a little ring formed where he lay. She took in her faint breath quiveringly when the ring broke and she saw him get upon his feet unsteadily. Then the lines formed again—two slanting walls of fine young brawn. But none of these things that she had seen had set alight her eyes as they were lighted now.

With a yell of almost demoniacal joy, the mob surged beneath the veranda, the warriors crouching on their unsteady pedestals to avoid the timbers overhead. As he was borne beneath, and out of

her delighted sight, Adams cast one glance up at the girl leaning eagerly across the rail. Her eyes had been awaiting his and the light that flared in both their eyes as they met told her that he had fought for her; told him that she had known he'd win.

She rose then, folded her little flag and thrust it into the pocket of her coat. With the others she descended to the club-room below and waited for him there.

She withdrew to one side and watched with curious interest the great crowd in the street, fretting impatiently for a nearer glimpse of the victors.

The four horses had been taken from a high tally-ho and a score of youths were running ropes from the front axle of the vehicle away down the street. The girl perceived it was the intention of the crowd to drag the tally-ho to the city in the good old way of joyous, eager crowds. And as she watched she saw a man in the blue overalls of a laborer, his face and hands smoke-blackened, break through the throng on the walk and approach the club-house. She saw a policeman step in front of him and bar the way. The laborer and the officer seemed to argue. The former, his face toward her, she saw gesticulate angrily and stamp his foot, and then she saw a look of dumb pain in

his blackened face as the officer, without more ado, seized him by the shoulders roughly, and turning him about, pushed him into the crowd which parted to make way for his broad, squat figure.

The girl felt a hand upon her arm. She turned quickly and looked up into Adams's face.

The little light of fright fled from her eyes and a mist gathered in its place as she murmured eagerly:

"Oh, John, John, how glorious it was!"

He smiled down at her sadly.

"And see," she said, "look—they are going to drag the team down town in the tally-ho."

Through the window he saw the throng. His face at the pane was recognized and a cheer rose that prompted the girl to draw back, blushing. From where she stood at one side she could see a broken line of the crowd.

"Oh, look, John!" she cried, "there's that dirty old man again. He's been drinking. The police drove him away before."

He turned in the direction of her gaze, then drew away instantly from the window.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

His face was pale and his mouth was set in a straight line.

"Nothing," he replied quickly. "Come," and

started toward the door opening upon the now deserted field.

She followed him unquestioningly.

On the porch she said:

"Aren't you going on the tally-ho with the team?"

"No," he replied, "I don't like being made a fool of. There's a gate over there on Cass Avenue. We'll go out that way and they won't see us."

"But, John——"

"I don't want to ride down town in state," he complained, testily. "I'd rather be with you. I shall have to be with them until train time. Now, I'd rather be with you." And he looked down at her and smiled.

By a devious route they finally reached the Campus Martius, and at the little door of a big Woodward Avenue hotel he left her, for she had told him that friends would be awaiting her there with whom she would take dinner later.

"At the train, dear?" she said, as he opened the door for her.

"Yes. Good-bye till then."

She followed his great figure with her eyes and saw it disappear in the crowd below. Then she turned and passed down the narrow corridor from the "ladies' entrance."

II

It had been a glorious day.

The first touch of winter was in the air, clear, crisp, and set the blood a-tingling.

"Ideal football weather," the sporting writer of the *Journal* had called it in the early afternoon edition where, with the wisdom of his species, he had sought to forecast the game's result.

In honor of the occasion a gracious citizenry had swathed Jefferson and Woodward Avenues in bandages of maize and blue, and all day long the small boy had been as active as though it were the Fourth of July rather than the fifth of November.

And now in the evening, the older portion of the citizenry withdrew, and the theatres, the lobbies of the prominent hotels, the clubs, and all the places of public meeting, were turned over, unconditionally, to youth.

A kindly-disposed commissioner of police had instructed his men to be lenient.

"Boys will be boys," he said to the captain on night duty at the Central Station, as he left the office.

"But what about the *girls*?" inquired the captain with a twinkle in his own eyes that was almost youthful.

"Well—they will be, too—sometimes," the commissioner replied.

In the lobby of the Russell House, where the team was installed, the Mayor of Detroit—who himself had been an undergraduate once and remembered it—addressed the throng below him, from the first broad landing of the wide marble stairway.

His rounded periods were cheered to the echo; and when he drily observed that all the policemen had been taken off duty, the roof fairly lifted and guests came pouring into the corridors, their faces clearly indicating their alarm.

"You know," the Mayor observed, his eyes twinkling,—“we’ve what they call a slow town here. Well, it rests with you boys, for this night at least, to make it fast. Moreover, it’s an old town, a *very* old town, and wherever you find an absence of paint you have my permission and the permission of the commissioner of police to redecorate. I suppose red would be the proper tint. I have had a fondness for the color ever since I was one of you—an undergrad.”

In the pandemonium that ensued the Mayor judiciously withdrew. The crowd “rushed” the lobby, and staid old men, in town over the day, sought places of greater security on landings, behind pillars, and in corners, whence a view of the

proceedings might be had without participating in them.

One by one various members of the team appeared at the head of the stairway, and at each appearance a welcome of ringing cheers was sounded. The director of athletics, a little man with a wiry moustache and a square chin, addressed the crowd from the top step after prolonged cries of "Speech! Speech!"

The trainer, a huge man with a face like a fist, a Cockney accent, and the shoulders of an ox, shouted a few phrases above the din. Each time he uttered the word, "Michigan," which he insisted upon pronouncing, "Mitch-ti-gan," he was cheered wildly.

When Adams appeared on the upper landing and hesitated there, the commotion became deafening.

A section of the throng swept up to him, seized him, and carried him further down where he was made to blurt a few incoherent sentences in which one caught, above the noise, a constant repetition of the words—"fellows"—"great"—"wiped 'em up"—"knew it"—"right stuff"—and others from the campus jargon, generally as unintelligible as Ute gutturals.

Then he, too, descended, and became an atom of the mass below, as eager to cry "Speech!" to the others when they should appear, as the mob about

him now had been to demand a word from him.

It all combined to constitute a riot of triumph, a veritable debauch in the sensation of triumph—a triumph well won, and fairly; honestly accepted, and as honestly celebrated by nearly three thousand as irresponsible young spirits as ever took possession of a town.

Into the streets they poured. The police gritted their teeth and restrained themselves with an effort, the strength of which their tormentors did not dream.

Passers-by were good-naturedly jostled off the pavement by phalanxes of obstreperous lads, who swept all before them as arm in arm, eight and ten abreast, they advanced upon the city.

Money had been wagered and money had been won and there was money to spend and be spent; and they spent it. They took possession of the restaurants. In the theatres they shouted the choruses of all the songs they knew, and between acts they whistled, stamped, and applauded, in that deadly unison and rhythm that has been known to bring buildings tumbling about the heads of less vehement folk.

And why all this stampede of ecstasy ?

Because two minutes before the umpire's call of

time, John Adams, a tall, broad, blonde giant, whom few of his worshipers really knew, had found an elliptical pig-skin and, rushing like an engine of destruction down a well turfed field, had touched it to the ground behind a pair of slim, straight poles!

III

The theatre was packed. The throng extended into the lobby where the ticket scalpers in the faces of the police hawked their coupons each of which called for "an orchestra chair on the aisle three rows back." The leader of one group leaned against a convex bulletin board bearing the lithograph of a gaily-garbed soubrette in red, and waving his cane, shouted the first line of a familiar college song. Each man of the group lent his voice to the clamor, and there was at once precipitated a riot of discord in which the original air was lost in a brazen yell. There was much rushing; a congestion at the window of the box-office, at which hands were thrust, between the fingers of which, dangled government notes of various denominations. Beyond the window, his bust framed in the narrow rim of metal, the treasurer of the theatre sat on his high stool dealing out the tickets with the *sang-froid* and ease of a judge upon the bench. Men left their change there on the ledge. The

treasurer always shouted at them once—perhaps it was the voice of his conscience merely—then with a sweep of his curved palm magically transferred the money to the till. A solid V of eager youth with its apex at the narrow door of green, pushed and jostled and shouted.

“Look out there behind, you’re squeezing a lady!” some one cried.

“Don’t she like it?” called an ungallant, if witty, youth away at the back of the crowd. There was a little feminine shriek, then a peal of laughter in which the throng joined. The police in the lobby were completely at a loss. No man was to be arrested, their commissioner had instructed them. But they gripped their clubs nervously, longing to leap into that seething maelstrom of manhood uncontrolled and wield them to the best purpose. A policeman is born with a hatred for loud-voiced youth, particularly if the youth wear good clothes of trim and fashionable cut. So the policemen there in the lobby, disarmed by the strict injunction of their chief, were as helpless as babes, and like babes they drew down their mouths and gripped tighter that which was within their clutch. Now and again, however, one, bolder than his fellows, and moved perhaps by a spirit of chivalry would shout gruffly:—

"Remember there are ladies in this crowd, you fellows."

"Sure," some one in the throng would yell.

Finally the manager appeared, and stationing a man at each of the other two doors, flung them back and relieved the pressure at the one. This stroke of genius resulted in a quick emptying of the brilliant lobby and an equally sudden congestion at the tops of the aisles where the ushers in their dark green uniforms were conducting the audience to the seats below amid the confusion resulting from exchanged coupons, balcony tickets presented on the lower floor and the presence in the crowd of "general admissions" who demanded their rights to a seat anywhere in the house. The manager, a tall young man with a black mustache and black eyes darted here, there, through the crowd, thrusting aside the men whose money he had taken, and seeking by every means at his command to wrest order out of chaos.

It was after eight o'clock before the score of ushers were by circumstance permitted to emerge from under the burden of their responsibilities and creep away down-stairs to the smoking room where, flinging themselves on the long low lounges in sheer fatigue, they berated the patrons of the house roundly and condemned each and every

one to the hottest depths of a boiling-hot perdition.

Ten minutes later the manager himself conducted the men of the victorious eleven to their adjoining boxes, on the right. The great audience had had its collective eye upon those boxes, and at the appearance of the men a great shout went up from pit and gallery that sent the cold shivers up and down the spines of the already nervous actors behind the gold and scarlet curtain.

"There's the Count," some one shouted.

"Where? Yes!"

And the short, heavy person with the baby face who had been thus honored by selection from among his fellows arose in the box and bowed. The throng cheered again, and after that each man in turn was called for and each man rose and bowed.

During the clamor attendant upon this official welcome of the victors, a dozen men, quite as tall, quite as broad, and quite as serene of countenance, were ushered into the corresponding boxes across the house. Their appearance was not noticed, for the entire audience had turned in its seats to observe the men of Michigan, proud in the triumph that had come to them. But, finally, after each man had been given his salvo of applause some one noted the men on the other side.

"There's Cornell," was cried.

And the audience, to its everlasting credit, and after the fashion of youth's wild way, repeated for their good-cheer the welcome they had given the fellows of the victorious banners. The vanquished had hardly expected the ovation they received. A football man is not a modest creature, as a general rule, but in this instance it must in justice be recorded that several of the brawny giants in the left-hand boxes withdrew behind the curtains.

Their names, however, were known to the throng below them and were called.

Finally, unable by modesty to end the uproar, they rose, one by one and bowed, and the feeling engendered that moment has never died, but lives in the hearts of Cornell men to-day, who are wont in reminiscent mood to refer to it as the "finest show of fellowship on record."

A youth with a high tenor voice, who could not be distinguished from the rear of the theatre started the chorus of "The Yellow and the Blue." The boys around him took it up and the citizenry in the balcony were treated to such a song recital as they had never heard before. In the midst of it the discovery was suddenly made by some keen youth in the gallery that one man was missing from

the right-hand boxes. He nudged his companion. The word was passed along the rail. Then, with a suddenness that caused the women in the balcony to start with little screams, one name was shrieked above the clamor of the lower floor:

"Adams! Adams! Adams!"

The singing ceased.

The cry was taken up, repeated, screeched.

A commotion was observed in the box and then a tall figure arose. It was the manager. A silence that was awesome descended upon the house.

He held up his hand.

"I'm sorry," he began.

"Adams!" some one shrieked. Part of the audience laughed. The rest hissed.

"I am sorry," the manager resumed, "but Mr. Adams is not here to-night."

He sat down.

It was well that at that instant the orchestra commenced a medley of college airs by way of overture.

Presently the shrill tinkle of a little bell was heard, and with a swish the curtain lifted, disclosing the glittering, golden court of an Oriental monarch. There was a blare of trumpets and a score of lithe-limbed dancers appeared upon the stage. The crowd cried its huge delight and the college yell was flung across the footlights to the end that

several of the dancers made missteps, and, covered with a confusion that brought forth another cheer, rushed into the wings.

After that first catastrophe the audience lent itself to a full enjoyment of the play. Occasionally when the chief comedian gave utterance to a joke of ancient manufacture, the throng gave voice to its displeasure, by way of criticism, but more often the clamor sprang from keen appreciation of a song or bit of funny "business."

In all the audience there was, perhaps, but a single spectator whose face showed him to have no interest either in the audience and its noise or the action on the stage. He sat at one end of the balcony, back from the rail, unnoticed by those about him, satisfied, seemingly, to look on without participation either in the pleasure or the anger of the crowd around him. When his gallery champion cried out his name he had shrunk in his seat and almost held his breath, but now he sat up, his arms folded across his deep, broad breast.

He had entered the theatre late. Indeed there had been no one in the lobby when he bought his ticket. He was glad when he learned the location of his seat. He had thus far avoided all contact with the crowd. He would continue to avoid it. Through the long first act he sat looking down, ap-

parently seeing nothing, staring blankly as though dreaming, yet awake.

When the second act was well under way, he glanced at his watch. He drew out his hat from beneath the chair and inconveniencing no one, left his seat. He glided up the aisle close to the wall. In the lobby, less brilliant now, he squared his shoulders and drew in a long, deep breath. He lighted a cigarette and for a space stood just outside the door, in the street, idly watching the passers-by.

At the soldier's monument a group of students—he recognized them as such in the lighted thoroughfare—had formed a ring around some one who appeared to be dancing on the asphalt as they shouted, rhythmically, and clapped their hands. As he watched, Adams saw the ring part on the side nearest him and he glimpsed the dancer. All the blood went out of his face. He threw away his cigarette and buttoned his coat nervously. With a cry, the ring resolved itself into two lines and paraded down the street with the dancer, who was obviously unsteady on his legs, supported by a twain of students, at the front. Adams, at the edge of the curb, perceived the goal toward which the poor little procession was making its way—the portal of a huge German restaurant which he knew well. A picture of its interior as he remembered it

flashed upon his mind—the long room, filled with tables, many white-clad waiters, stolid of face, light of tread. The head of the procession reached the wide door, bright beneath the great electric sign above. He waited until the last man had entered, then crossed the street swiftly. In the outer hall he heard a medley of noises beyond the mahogany and glass partition. He heard the quick shuffle of feet. Some one was trying to dance on the sanded floor. In the midst of the jig he flung back the connecting door and entered the room of riot.

IV

He was immediately observed, and the crowd with a single voice shouted him a welcome. Through the shifting gossamer of smoke that filled the room he distinguished many familiar faces.

“Come over here, old man,” he heard some one call. He turned, and stared without a sign of recognition at a young man, who, with many gestures, indicated a vacant chair at a near-by table. He saw the smoke, the waiters gliding noiselessly through it, the littered floor, the wet, glistening table-tops. These misty details he saw dimly, as one sees things in a dream.

His face was pale; there were unfamiliar lines

about his mouth, and an unnatural glitter was in his eyes.

He saw the dancer, a man of age who wore the clothes of a laborer, fling himself heavily upon a frail chair at the nearest table, across which he leaned unsteadily, wagging his head and muttering incoherently.

Adams strode over to him and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Come," he said, quietly.

With an effort the man balanced himself and lifted his heavy eyes.

"Come," Adams repeated.

It was as though the youths at the other tables knew it to be a psychological moment. The noise subsided. Every eye in the room was intent upon Adams, strong in his splendid youth, and upon the man beside whom he stood, and who was weak in his age.

Adams was seen to encircle the man's shoulders with one arm and fairly lift him from the chair. On his feet he was unsteady. Adams supported him to the door of the restaurant, which swung back noiselessly as the ill-mated couple disappeared.

Then were exchanged many glances among those who in silence had watched the little play.

"What's he going to do with the old guy?" some one asked.

A general, half-forced laugh of relief ensued, which broke the tension, and immediately the company relapsed into its previous state of conviviality. The songs were resumed. The noise developed swiftly and the strangely incongruous incident of Adams's disappearance with the drunken moulder was forgotten straightway.

No one even took the trouble to go to a window to see if developments had occurred outside. And if one had been thus sufficiently interested, he would merely have observed Adams hail a passing cab, into which, as it drew up at the curb, he thrust the man, hesitating an instant with his hand on the door to mutter a certain address to the cabman leaning from his box.

The driver touched his horse, and the vehicle swung into Woodward Avenue. Of a sudden, from the dark patch of pavement that the restaurant faced, Adams felt himself flung into a maelstrom of light.

The façades of two theatres were all a-glitter; an immense confectionery across the street was ablaze, and, looking down at the pavement through the window in the cab door, Adams noted the weird, distorted reflections in the asphalt ooze that gives

the city streets at night the uncertain quality of a looking-glass wantonly smeared with pitch.

He blinked in the yellow glare of the street illumination. It was as though he were passing through a tunnel of brilliance. A car whirled by, with clanging gong. He caught a fleeting, confused glimpse of the several passengers.

As the cab proceeded, his attention was attracted now and then to groups of young men loitering at various corners as though in contemplation of some deed, very secret, if not very terrible. The lilting chorus of a college song that he recognized was brought to him in the noiselessly rolling cab. Before the last store-lights in the business district were passed he had obtained such an impression of the city as he had never had before.

Through the window in the door he saw the skeleton trees in Grand Circus Park as the cab cut the circle of its area, and he shivered at the prospect of the winter they suggested.

A sound very close to him caused him to start. He smiled, looked down, and the smile went out of his eyes and left them cold and hard.

The man beside him had succumbed to the comfort of the cab and was snoring gently. Passing beneath an electric lamp, the light fell an instant on his face, pale beneath the stubble beard, and the

splotches of grime. His knees were high and his hands, broad, work-hardened, lay limp upon them.

Adams turned again to the window.

The cab was passing through a residence district now. He noted with a shifting, vague interest, the houses—big, shapeless for the most part, and set far back in broad yards. The lights in the lower windows glared yellow like the earth-close eyes of crouching monsters.

Suddenly Adams pulled himself together. He began to experience a livelier interest in the dark picture of the street, with its broad curbs, its iron fences, dark hedges, and wide yards. He pressed his face against the window in the cab door, and now and again twisted his neck to gaze as far back down the street as the swift motion of the vehicle would permit.

He remembered definitely, vividly, certain landmarks of his young boyhood, as he was whirled on, noiselessly, save for the rhythmic *clackety-clack* of the horse's hoofs on the echoing asphalt. There was the house from the side yard of which he had once, as a tiny lad, stolen a great armful of roses. There, again, was the house with the smoke tree near the porch, behind which Pauline, his little sister, and he had once hidden until the policeman passed, indolently swinging his night stick.

Adams smiled at the recollection.

The cab came opposite a tall apartment house at the junction of a cross-town car line. On the ground now occupied by the ungainly, rambling pile of stone, he remembered vividly, had stood, when he was a very small boy—hardly big enough to push his cart—a little shack occupied by an old cobbler, deserted in his age by a son who had robbed him. Very many were the hours he had spent in that little shop. He recalled certain of those hours with a momentary pang of sadness. The cobbler had been a soldier in Poland, in his time, and was wont to tell great stories of his own valor, to which the yellow-headed lad, all forgetful of his mission and his cart, had listened, wide-eyed and open-mouthed. The memory came swift and certain and distinct in detail, and in the richness of it Adams shrank from the ugly stone pile in passing, as though it were a horrid thing thus to thrust itself upon a young man's memory of his tender boyhood.

As he dreamed thus the cab turned a corner, suddenly. The rich residential thoroughfare vanished like the palace in the pantomime, and Adams, his face still close to the glass, saw a row of little, squat, mean houses, set regularly behind low white picket fences. Only here and there a light

shone from small, square windows. The street seemed totally deserted, save for a single dog that he saw crawl under one of the low-latched gates and vanish behind a house that was like all the others in the little squalid street. And as he noted these things, the cab pulled up before such another house, and, mechanically, he passed his hand over his forehead, as a child does when awakened.

A brief parley ensued with the burly driver of the cab, comical in his bristling fur cape.

"Kin yeh git 'im out?" he asked.

"Yes."

One of the windows in the second story of the cottage before which the cab had stopped, was aglow, and across the drawn shade a shadow passed, and passed again.

Adams shook the sleeper in the cab. Finally, after a series of muffled grunts and grumblings that were like remonstrances, the man was gotten out.

"All right?" inquired the driver, gathering up the reins.

"All right," Adams replied; whereat the driver spoke to his horse, turned, and drove back.

Adams supported the tottering figure of the man to the door of the house and fumbled for the knob, which, when his fingers found it, turned in his hand and the door swung open. On a table in the

room at the end of the narrow, bare, unlighted hallway, stood a lamp, turned low. As he half carried, half led the man into the room, Adams heard footsteps overhead. And as he cast his burden down upon a carpet-covered lounge, pushed back against the wall at the further end of the room, he heard a voice from above call:

"Is dat you?"

"Come down," he answered.

There was a little, frightened, feminine, "Oh!" followed by quick, heavy footfalls on the bare stairs. The next instant the short, thick figure of a woman was framed by the doorway. The light of the lamp struck her face which was broad and kindly.

"Chon!" she exclaimed.

His eyes met hers and he smiled faintly. Then his gaze wandered to the lithograph of the Christ tacked to the wall, and to the couch beneath, and he said:

"There's father; I brought him home."

The woman uttered a little cry and bent over the prostrate figure.

"Ah," she muttered. Then, glancing back over her rounded shoulder, she asked: "Where you git him?"

"Down town," the boy replied, quietly.

"So." The woman sat down, and as long as her son was with her she kept her eyes upon him, oblivious, seemingly, of the unfeeling body on the couch.

"When you come in?" she asked.

"This morning," he replied. "I played football to-day."

"Ah, yes," she murmured, nodding. "I heard the noise. Yes."

There ensued a moment's silence that was complete, save for the heavy breathing of the sleeper on the couch.

"Chon," the woman said, calmly, "you don't do so?" And she indicated with a gesture the prone shape on the lounge.

The boy laughed forcedly, and shook his head.

"No," he said.

"Ah, yes, no," his mother muttered.

"How's Pauline?" he asked.

"She is well; she went to a dance."

He shivered as with cold.

"Isn't it late?" he asked.

"No," his mother replied. "She be home maybe a hour; maybe two hour."

Each seemed conscious of the infinite labor of the conversation.

"Well," John said after half an hour, "I guess I'd better be going."

"So soon!" his mother exclaimed. "Why not in the morning? We go to church, you and me."

He shook his head, sadly.

"No," he said. "I must go back to-night. The train leaves before long."

"All right," she muttered.

At the gate in the low fence he turned. His mother's figure was silhouetted against the light of the room at the end of the hall.

"Good-bye," he said, "and tell Pauline to take care."

"Good-bye," she called to him softly.

She turned back into the house at once and he heard the door shut.

Passing beneath an electric light he examined his watch. The train was due to leave in an hour. He decided to walk to the station. The cold felt good on his face.

He straightened his shoulders and walked with long, even strides, looking neither to right nor left.

He found Janet waiting in the shadow of the baggage-room doorway. The station was thronged with a shouting, jostling crowd. Taking her arm, he guided her through the gate and assisted her to the platform of the last coach.

"You hold the seat, will you?" he asked. "I want to smoke. We broke training to-night, you know."

She nodded, smiling.

And until the porter's call he paced up and down the long platform of the train shed. As the train pulled out he swung himself to the platform of the rear coach and entered.

V

A throng of several hundred awaited the arrival of the train at midnight in the railway-yard. At the first shriek of the whistle, away beyond the bend of the river, the cheering commenced. It gathered force sufficiently to smother completely the pounding of the great engine as it thundered past the trim little station and came to a grinding stop.

In the crowd that packed the platform the old men were as eager as the lads; and there were not a few such old men with white in their hair and with lined faces that the lights of the station made radiant. Professors were there, eagerly jostling, squirming, edging in the crowd, holding their own in the tight-squeezed mass with elbows every whit as pointed as the elbows of the youngsters that were thrust into their sides.

The crowd discovered at once that the team was

in the second coach, and before a man of the eleven had reached the platform the car was surrounded.

Late as was the hour, speeches were demanded, nor was a path opened through the throng until the demand had been acceded to. A circle formed around the band and its brassy noise blared out upon the night until every townsman within range of the farthest-carrying horn flung up his window and poked a head wonderingly into the outer darkness.

As the crowd surged down the platform to the front of the train, Adams, taking advantage of the clear way at the rear, assisted Janet to the ground, and, unobserved, they passed out into the street through the tall turnstile in the shadow of the baggage-room.

She breathed deeply of the cool night air and he felt the pressure of her hand upon his arm as her steps quickened to his.

In the crowded train she had refrained from all attempts to learn the reason for his silence. Only now and then, as in answer to some question that she asked him, had he spoken in the hour and a half required to cover the forty miles.

But now in the silence of the darkened street she took courage. At the top of the steep hill, as they

passed beneath a sputtering electric lamp, she looked up at him and asked:

"What is it, John—tell me—what is it?"

She hung upon his reply eagerly, a little frightened, though she realized, in seeking to analyze her foreboding that she could not tell herself why she should.

"There's a great deal, Janet," he replied calmly. She perceived an unfamiliar note in his voice, a note that seemed to her to sound a sort of resignation.

"But *what*—— Can't you tell me? Has anything happened?"

For a moment he did not answer, but then he said: "Yes, dear; several things have happened—several things ——"

"What?" she asked, almost in a whisper, and he felt her hand's pressure upon his arm again.

He continued, ruminatively, quite as though she had not spoken: "Several things, that make other things clearer to me now—much clearer."

She had never heard him speak like this before. Perhaps it was a matter intimately personal with him, too intimately personal even for her to share his knowledge, his consideration of it. She almost regretted having asked him. Why had she not prattled on about the game, the splendid victory,

his own skill? But when next he spoke she understood she had done no wrong.

"I must tell you about those things, Janet; I must tell you now—to-night—I had meant to before."

Her hand upon his arm tightened its grasp.

"John, what *is* it? *What* has happened?" Now she made no effort to conceal the fright that sounded in her voice.

He patted her hand, white on his black sleeve, and laughed lightly—forcedly, she thought.

"There, don't be afraid," he said; "I haven't committed any crime."

She laughed then herself, and said, "You *did* frighten me, though."

They had come to the library. As they passed, the deep-throated bell in the tower rang out twice upon the stillness—tang—tung.

Fifteen minutes past one, Janet calculated.

They took the diagonal walk to the crossing of South and East University Avenues. Her room was in the second house from the corner, on the former street.

He seemed of a sudden to perceive where they were, for, looking about him, he said: "Janet, it is something I must tell you for your own sake. And when I'm through, you can say to me what you think; it won't hurt."

A step and they were at her home.

"Can't you sit here on the porch a few minutes?" he asked; "I shan't keep you long."

With sudden anger she replied:

"John, if you don't speak out at once what you have to say, I shall go in immediately. You've said again and again that there is something you must tell me; why don't you? Couldn't you see; can't you see now that I haven't begged you to tell because it seems to pain you?"

"It does," he exclaimed, "you can't know how it pains me." He looked down at her where she sat on the step and gazed into her uplifted face.

"What is it?" she asked calmly.

He sat beside her.

"I hardly know where to begin," he commenced, and hesitated. He seemed to be arranging the words in his mind, then, after a moment he resumed.

"I told you it wasn't any crime," he said. "Well, maybe it isn't, but Janet," he went on quickly, "while you were standing at the window of the club this afternoon, you saw a man—do you remember? He wore overalls. His face and hands were black. You said you saw a policeman push him back into the crowd, and you believed him to be drunk. He was drunk, Janet——"

"How do you know?" she asked, quite indifferently, "did you see him again?"

"Yes, I saw him again," he said. "I saw him in a big restaurant that was crowded with students, men whom I know, whom I have eaten with, whose cheers till now have been—been inspiring to me."

"John—really"—the girl put in impatiently, "I can't see why that drunken man should have made such an impression—that common laborer—nor what he can have to do——"

"Wait a moment," he remonstrated. "You remember, when you called my attention to him, I took you out across the field, and down town another way? Yes? Well, I had a reason. I didn't want that drunken man to see me—to see you ——"

"But, dear," she exclaimed with a little laugh.

"It was my father," he said, quietly.

"John!"

Passion, shock, anger, perhaps pity, were all in the tone of her exclamation. Unconsciously she drew away from him.

"Don't be afraid," he said, holding out a hand to her. "I shan't smirch you." She realized her movement then, and pity filled her heart, pity for this great creature beside her whose own heart, the heart she knew, was like a child's.

"Dear," she murmured, "don't think that. Don't. I didn't mean to."

He seemed not to notice the plea in her voice.

"I don't blame you," he went on as calmly as before, "but it was because I *knew* you would do just that that I haven't told you before. But now—I can't wait any longer. Listen. My parents are Poles, Janet. My father and mother were born in the same tiny town in Poland a little way from Cracow. They came to this country when I was only five years old—before my sister—my little sister Pauline, was born. My father was a peddler at first; afterward for a time he was a street sweeper; and then, during a strike, a good many years ago, he went into the Stove Works and learned the moulder's trade. It's a good trade, Janet; the men sometimes earn four dollars a day, pouring the hot iron into the sand. My father earns that now ——"

She had listened to him with rapt attention, the pale light white upon her lifted face.

"But John," she exclaimed, "your name—your name isn't foreign?"

He laughed.

"My name isn't 'Adams,'" he replied.

"John!"

"No," he went on—"but maybe my name is,

too, after all. I should have said 'perhaps.' My father's name is not. It is Adamowsky." He heard her little quick in-taking of breath and looked away.

"You have never heard of such things before, have you?" he asked. "But it is a custom with Polish young men nowadays. Their names handicap them in their work, in their advancement, so they often change them."

"Yes, I understand," she murmured.

"Well," he went on, "until I was ten years old I attended the parochial school ——"

"John, you're not a Catholic!" she exclaimed.

"No. You needn't be afraid of that either. I'm not—now," he answered. "And then," he continued as calmly as before, "I was sent to the public schools. It was the superintendent who wrote my name 'Adams.' He did it perhaps by accident; anyway it has been my name ever since. Plain 'John Adams.' I don't suppose I could make you understand the relation between parents and an only son among my people, so I shan't try, but it is to the son that the parents look for the fulfilment of all their happiest hopes. That I should have been sent here to college is not so surprising as you may consider it. I *was* sent here. I was sent here by my father who works in the sand of the moulding room;

by my mother who, to help, has for three years taken in washing; and by my little sister, Pauline, who sits all day at a bench and tears the stems out of tobacco leaves in a great, gray factory. They are the ones who have sent me here to college—to study, to learn, to make something of myself ——”

Thus far to the girl, save for little moments when from the narrative she had suffered twinges of pain, it was as though she were listening to a story of one whom she knew not. She had been moved and strangely thrilled at times, and now leaning forward eagerly she exclaimed:

“And you have made something of yourself; you have, John! Oh, don’t you see how brave you are—what you can do with the education they have given you; what you can accomplish for yourself, and so, for them?”

He did not interrupt her, but when she had done he looked down at her pityingly and muttered, as though suffering an intense physical agony: “Oh Janet! to hear you talk like that—to hear you say such things; to feel you haven’t understood.”

She looked away from him piqued, chagrined that she had erred.

“I brave!” he went on, “I brave? Do you think I dare call myself brave when I think of that little girl tearing stems out of tobacco leaves until her

fingers are stiff; when I think of my mother bent over a tub, her face wreathed in steam? I can hear the smooth rasp of the wet clothes now as she rubs them on the board. I brave when I see my father working in the awful heat of a moulding-room—cooked alive—that I may dawdle here and kick a leather ball about a field?” He looked away with a sneer. But the bitterness in his voice failed to move her.

“Your education!” she exclaimed, tersely,—“you have that!”

He laughed harshly. “Education! my education! what is it? There are my people—my father a moulder, a good workman who sometimes is drunk, and, so, a drunkard; my mother a wash-woman; my little sister a stripper in a cigar factory. They have given me my education and in giving me it what have they done? They have made me hate them!”

“John, John, you mustn’t say that,” she implored.

“I must say it,” he replied,—“for it’s the truth. They have lifted me above them. All the love I should have for them is gone, obliterated. My feeling toward them is the feeling a man has for a dog that has helped him, perhaps saved him from drowning. It is a feeling but it is not love. I’ve known this a long time, Janet, but not till now have I

known what to do. There is my place, there beside them. Back in the little home I should be ashamed to take you into. I have been educated away from them; from my father, my mother, my little sister; yes," he added with a virulent bitterness, "I have even been educated away from my God!"

She placed her hand on his arm but did not speak.

"Educated even away from my God!" he repeated hotly. "They are Catholics. I should be. I am not. And what has been given me in return? Nothing; less than nothing; yes, something, for I have been given by this 'education' that has been paid for by my sister's blood, my mother's body, and my father's soul, the power to see my own false position. I thank Heaven for that! Oh, don't remonstrate," he said, as she leaned toward him as though to speak. "I understand. From the high plane of your view the picture is not the same. I am closer to it. I see the fault of the method, the absurdity of the thing, the miserable falsity of the conception. You cannot understand, Janet. It is because I have known you could not, that I have not told you till now."

"But, John, dear," she murmured tenderly, pityingly, "I do understand."

"No," he contradicted gently, "you don't; you can't; it is not for you to understand."

He stood up, and looking down at her smiled sadly. The bell in the tower of the library rang out upon the stillness, six times—tang—ting—tang—ting—tang—ting!

"But perhaps you can feel a little as I feel, and know something of how I have felt for weeks. I shall go back to-morrow." There was no drama in the declaration. It was uttered calmly.

The girl stood up now suddenly and leaned toward him.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "You're not really going—going back—there?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm going back. I am going to try to find what has been stolen from me. I am going to try to rid myself of my unrest; to undo for myself the wrong that all unconsciously has been done me, by hands that have hit me when they only meant to be gentle. I'm going back, Janet, to work in the moulding-room beside my father."

She gazed at him, in mute wonder.

"And give up your course, John? Now?" she cried, as the full force of his determination dawned upon her.

"I am going to give up the false that has been

thrust upon me, for the good that I have flung away," he answered. "I shall work until I have paid back all my mother's money, and my father's money, and my little sister's money. Would to God I could pay them for the aching backs, the stiff fingers, and the tortured souls. I shall try. And if when I have tried, I find that, after all, it has been of no avail, that these debts can never be paid, perhaps I shall come back. Good-bye."

He held out his hand. He felt hers cold in his palm.

"Will you forgive me?" he asked simply,—“I should not have—I should not have cared for you. It was wrong. Forgive me ——”

“There is nothing to forgive,” she said, quite firmly. He drew away his hand then, and hers fell limp at her side.

She stood motionless and watched his figure as it swung up the street.

Her heart bade her lips call out to him. But the million voices of the night bade her heart be still. And then, even as she watched, where he was, there was he not, but only blackness.

THE ARTIST

The Artist

I

WHENCE came he no one knew, not even Marta. He came in a mid-November storm and was accompanied by wind and snow that fell in broad wet flakes.

He first appeared in Kernafsky's place and moved so noiselessly across the floor, flinging himself upon a chair at one of the round tables, that Kernafsky did not perceive him at once. When he did he was startled, and a little confused. Then the lunch was set out, and when the stranger filled two plates and carried them to the round table, Kernafsky knew he was human and was satisfied. For two hours he sat there sipping his beer and nibbling a disc of sausage. He volunteered nothing concerning himself, and Kernafsky, who was a model of his kind, asked no questions. The stranger ate because he was hungry and drank because he was thirsty, and when he had eaten and drunk his fill he paid.

But if Kernafsky could not question, he could at least speculate. The shiny black valise on the floor

beside the stranger's chair bothered him not a little. And the roll of oilcloth clasped close under his arm, even while he ate of the sausage, onion, and rye-bread piqued the sleepy curiosity of the proprietor. At last Kernafsky lingered on the point of making a judicious inquiry, and doubtless would have done so had not the stranger looked up just then and asked where in the neighborhood he might find a room—"a cheap room," he added, by way of condition.

"So, a stranger?" Kernafsky ventured. A nod was his reply. The proprietor hesitated, then, as it was apparent that his customer was not inclined to converse, he said, tersely:

"Maybe you can get one at Gometsky's."

"Good."

The stranger drew the back of his hand across his forehead, coughed, and asked the way.

If he found a room with Mrs. Gometsky, Kernafsky speculated, much would be learned of him in time, for Mrs. Gometsky was not secretive. So he even went so far, by way of assistance, as to lead the way to the walk in front, and point off up the street, saying:

"The third from the corner in the block above."

For fully a minute Kernafsky stood there watch-

ing the man's slim figure bending to the wind, then turned back into the bar where he proceeded to wipe off the tables.

It was Marta who responded to the faint knock that fell upon the door two minutes thereafter. A confusion seized the caller at her sudden appearance in the doorway, and he mumbled unintelligibly. Once in the room, however, he managed to state his needs, though not without a certain embarrassment still. Marta called her mother who was in the kitchen and who straightway appeared, holding a lamp at the height of her head. Conscious that she was looking him over, and doubtfully, perhaps, for she did not speak at once, the stranger who now had gathered his wits, said, as though by way of apology:

"I am an artist; I make pictures."

Why his abrupt classification of himself should have served an end so magically was as mysterious to the seeker as it would have been to Mrs. Gometsky, had she thought to ask herself. As it was, she put down the lamp and instructed Marta to show the room on the side with the one window over the street. So Marta took the lamp and led the way up the enclosed stairs.

"Here it is," she said, and pushing open a door, drew to one side for him to pass. The pipe of the

coal-stove below became a great "drum" here, and the room was comfortably warm.

Marta set the lamp on the stool and waited. The stranger crossed to the closet and looked in; then tested the bed and punched the pillows. Marta's anger rose. Such impudence! She would tell him he could not have the room at any price. But before she could summon the necessary courage he looked across at her and smiled. He coughed and one thin hand flew to his throat.

"Are you sick?" she asked quickly.

He smiled again and shook his head. He was though, she thought; she was certain he was sick. Oh, very well, she chanced, he could stay a while. It was raw and cold out-of-doors. It was impudent of him, but he could stay—perhaps a week.

"How much?" he inquired.

His voice was low and though husky not altogether unpleasing.

"Fifty cents a week."

He did not reply at once. Perhaps he would go of his own accord, she thought, and pitied him. He set the black shiny valise on the bed and opened it. Marta noticed some few of the poor things that comprised the contents. He unrolled the oil-cloth and spread it out. He began to whistle softly. Going to the closet he took off his shabby coat

and hung it up. As he turned his eyes met hers.

"Oh," he exclaimed and blushed. Thrusting his hand into a pocket he drew out several coins. For a moment he regarded them questioningly as they lay in his palm, then selecting one, he held it out to Marta who took it gingerly, between thumb and forefinger, as though it were unclean.

"All right. I'll take it."

As though conscious that he had conducted himself unbecomingly, he smiled, and the smile deepened and broadened until his whole face was lighted by it. As for Marta she began to understand something of the absurdity of his conduct and laughed. It was his smile and her laughter, born of it, that marked the beginning of their romance.

"You're so funny," she said.

He chuckled and coughed.

"It's the way I amuse myself," he replied. "There are different ways of being funny, you know. That happens to be mine. Some men amuse themselves by getting drunk and beating their wives. It's a trouble, getting drunk, and besides I have no wife."

Marta sat on one of the chairs, her elbows on her knees, leaning forward, watching him as he took

the poor things from the shiny valise. He talked steadily. It was as though the mechanism of his voice had slipped from his control.

"But it breeds trouble, being funny," he ran on. "Sometimes I have wished I could not be funny. It made me an enemy once. Not that it ever made me a friend. It never has. But it's better to be well hated than merely suffered. Eh? Yes, it is. I know. My enemy hates me. He's been trying for a week now to get the best of me. But I can fight him still." He assumed an attitude of defense. "It's here." He coughed and tapped his breast. The mechanism of his voice apparently had run down now. A wave of pity for him flowed from Marta's heart. Tears were very near her eyes as, turning from the drum of the stove-pipe, he said with a feeble smile: "That's good; that's warm."

Presently he glanced over his shoulder and said:

"Well, I suppose you want to know my name. It's Max. There's more of course. The rest is Dunafski. But I'm just Max. Never mind the rest. Now what's yours?"

She told him, and he smiled and nodded.

"And you make pictures?" she ventured expectantly.

"Oh yes, I make pictures," he said. "I shall make one here."

"Here!" She clasped her hands in her lap and her eyes lighted.

"Yes, here," he said, moving toward the bed. "I have done a little on it. See."

From the sheets of canvas that the oil-cloth had concealed he drew out one. He stooped, and Marta, looking down over his shoulder, saw the sketch of a girl standing in the doorway of what was perhaps an old house, looking off across a field. The figure only had been drawn with any degree of care.

"She's waiting for some one," Marta said, quietly.

"Ah!"

He started violently and stood upright, alert. Amazement and fright were in the girl's eyes. Then with a little cry of joy he seized her two hands in his, and bent over them.

"You understand! You understand!" he cried. His voice shook with emotion. "Ah, it is so good, so good. Another would have said she stood there watching the sunset; maybe just getting a breath of air. But you *know*. Yes, she is waiting. That is the name of the picture—'Waiting.' It is Life. I shall make it Life. Are we not all 'waiting'—like the girl?"

As she withdrew her hands and looked at him she saw how misty were his eyes.

"I am so glad I came—where some one understands," he muttered huskily.

Alone with him she was no longer afraid, for he had shown her his heart and she had seen its clean whiteness.

"Yes, I guess I understand," was all she said.

Yet what that sympathy meant to him who never before had felt its touch, was not hers to know.

II

Marta's hands were clasped in her lap; she leaned forward, her gaze intent upon that portion of the canvas which was visible above the man's shoulder. Making a little dab with a brush, every now and then he would lean back, and cocking his head to one side, inspect the effect of the stroke. Sometimes he would smile; once he even went so far as to rest his palette on the stool beside him and rub his hands.

"That is it; that is right!" he cried, and fell to coughing.

Marta got up then and went nearer him, looking down over his shoulder.

"It is beautiful," she murmured.

At the sound of her voice he started violently and she drew back. He laughed.

"I forgot you were there," he said. He bade her come nearer, which she did, rather shyly.

"Do you see the light? It is what I have worked for 'so long," he said—"The sunset light on the figure in the doorway, I mean,—on her hair? See? Do you see?"

He flung back his head and looked up at her inquiringly. Her eyes shifted from the canvas to his face and a smile appeared in them.

"It is beautiful," she repeated simply.

Many times while he worked, almost unconscious of her presence in the room, she had murmured that same phrase and always it had fallen musically upon his ears.

"Is it not?" he exclaimed joyously. His hand found hers, and quite unconsciously she sank upon her knees beside him. He slipped his arm across her shoulders, sensing the firm flesh beneath the calico of her frock.

"Ah," he said, quite as though speaking to himself. "Ah, some day it shall bring fame—and money ——"

"Yes," she whispered, "some day; I am sure of it—as sure as you are; but ——" She hesitated.

"What?" he asked, looking down at her.

She turned from him that he might not see her eyes.

"But it will mean that you will go away then," she said, quietly.

He gave her hand a little squeeze.

"Go away!" he cried, softly. "Go away from here—where it was painted—where I have worked! Go away from you, Marta! No—I shall not go away."

He drew her toward him, never so slightly, she submitting quite passively. Then suddenly flinging his other arm around her he pressed her close and kissed her again and again.

All the light had gone out of the sky and the shadows were lengthening in the further corners of the poor room. Against the wall the bed stood like an iron skeleton. The floor was uncovered and much stained. There were only two chairs, a low three-legged stool, and the easel, that Max himself had made out of two pieces of unplanned scantling and some laths.

Presently he got up and lighted the small lamp that stood on the window ledge. Setting it on the stool beside his palette he turned to the girl again.

"For if it means money and fame for me, it does for you, Marta," he said, soberly.

Her heart leaped. He had never spoken so before; never before had he kissed her as he had this

afternoon. She clenched the hand that hung limp at her side.

"What do you mean, Max?" she asked confusedly.

He regarded her a moment quizzically before he spoke.

"What I said," he replied.

Her heart fell like lead.

"I could never make pictures," she said, and shook her head.

She sank upon the second chair and, elbows on knees, supported her chin in her two hands.

He smiled across at her, but all the smile had gone out of her eyes.

"That doesn't make any difference," he assured her. "It's you that makes me able to paint."

She looked up questioningly. "Yes, it is," he insisted with unwonted enthusiasm. "It's you; why, it's you, Marta, that's helped me, really; you—you've seen what I mean. Just now you saw what the light on the figure in the doorway means."

"There's Father Durowsky, too," she suggested.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, yes," he said.

"But he doesn't understand—like you."

"That's maybe because he doesn't love you as I do," she would have said, but "He should" is what she did say.

He fell to coughing—dry, harsh—and the sound seemed to fill the room. Marta shuddered. Sometimes at night she would awake with the sound of his coughing filling the darkness about her. Would he never stop? She would screw her fingers into her ears and fall asleep again crying. And in the morning it was the first sound she heard—always the same, dry, harsh cough—even before she heard her mother moving heavily about below stairs, busy before daylight at the tasks of the home.

Now, after what he had said to her each cough seemed like a needle that pierced her heart. Would he never stop?

“It’s the dampness,” he managed to say at last, catching his breath. “It’s always worse when it’s damp. If it would only get cold and stay cold it would get better.”

“Do you feel like going out to-night?” she asked. “Maybe mother ——”

“No, I shall go,” he said. “It’s the first time I’ve coughed to-day—hard. I shall be all right. Besides it would bother your mother. It will be all right.”

Once before she had suggested to him that he share their evening meal and he had acquiesced. But Mrs. Gometsky, on that occasion, so plainly

showed the discomfort to which he had put her, that he resolved never again to eat with them, much as he wished to be near Marta. For her companionship had come to mean much to him. Though she seldom spoke while he worked, he felt her sympathy, and was glad for it. Perhaps one day when the public should consent to recognize his genius he would ask Marta to be his wife, and they would go back across the ocean—back home. The first time he planned this, half humorously, he laughed aloud, and when she asked him why he laughed he could not answer until he had conceived a reason that would not betray his whim.

"I was just thinking how fine it would be to eat paint and turn into a picture," he said, soberly—"a great, splendid picture, and be sold for—for a million dollars, and be hung in some famous gallery where all the world might come and see me."

She laughed with him then.

Now he went to the closet at the head of the bed and from a peg took down his old coat and cap. He wrapped the silken muffler that she had given him around his neck, and she held his coat for him and turned up his collar and buttoned it.

"I don't think I would ever go out if you were not here to button my coat," he said. She gave him many little pats, meantime marveling how

well an old coat *may* look, when the light is not too strong.

“Are you going to work to-night?” she asked, at the door.

He drew a long breath.

“No, not to-night, I am too tired. I shall go to bed early.” She listened to his footfalls on the stairs, then heard him cross the room below. The lower door slammed and she ran to the window. She saw his slight figure bend to the wind as he passed beneath the sputtering electric light that swung over the street at the corner.

Of late he had more often complained of being tired, than he had at first. He was working too hard, she decided; half the day reading proofs, half the day painting, and half the night dreaming wake dreams. This last she knew because he told her. And always, day and night, the dry, harsh cough.

Marta turned from the window and began “picking up” the room. The easel she pushed back into a corner and moved the stool in front of it. She stood one of the chairs at the head of the bed, for he had told her he often read at night, and placed the lamp upon it. When she had done this she sat on the edge of the bed at the foot, and with her elbows on her knees, an attitude almost habitual

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with her, stared at the shadow of the easel on the floor.

That afternoon, for a little moment, she had felt nearer to him than ever before, him whom almost every one shunned and called "queer." She had felt his lips pressed to hers; he had held her close to him—for a little moment. He had told her that her encouragement meant much to him because he knew she understood. But it had been so long. Why, she confessed, she had understood from the first; from the instant their eyes met across the threshold and she had led the way up the stairs to show him the room. Understood! God help him, of course she understood. And oh! if he only knew how well! What till now she had hidden in her heart she confessed to the shadow of the easel:

"I love you, Max; I love you!"

What if the picture could hear! He had said something about turning into a picture. She took up the lamp and approached the easel. The pale yellow light falling on the still wet paint accentuated the effect that he had tried so many times to produce and had at last achieved. She imagined herself to be the girl in the doorway looking off across the field, on whose hair played the last loving beam of the setting sun. Perhaps he *was* the

picture. She could not know how much of himself he had put into it. So, holding the lamp high in front of her she spoke the secret of her heart again, softly:

"I love you, Max; I love you!"

Breathlessly she waited; quite as though she expected the very paint to call out to her. Turning back, she put the lamp on the chair at the head of the bed, and pressed her hot cheek against the cool pillow. How many times she had done that. Always he had thought it was her fist that made the depression into which his cheek fitted so snugly. She did not tell him otherwise. She held her face there, lovingly, then kissed where his would touch.

With a last glance over her shoulder at the picture she extinguished the light with a breath, and went out of the room.

Below her mother was preparing the supper. Marta set the table and drew up the chairs.

"How is Max?" her mother asked.

"He said he was so tired."

The old woman shook her head. "It won't be long; then he'll go the hospital," she said.

A cry died on the girl's lips. The hospital! The great red building into which so many went, and out of which so few came, as she believed. He

could not go there. Besides, he was not sick. It was only because he was tired that he looked so pale and thin; and because it was damp that he coughed as he did. And there was the picture. That would bring about a change. Already, unfinished as it was she had planned a surprise for Max.

Some afternoon when he was hard at work, she would bring the great critic to see it; the great critic who had charge of the museum and of whom Max had often spoken to her. They would slip into the room noiselessly and inspect the picture even while Max painted on unconscious of their presence. And the great critic of the museum would proclaim it a work of genius, and would then and there buy it for the museum. And Max would take the money and go where he would not cough and where he would paint more pictures and still more, until his name was on the world's tongue and his own portrait everywhere. She would have helped; she would have helped. The joy of it! The hospital? Silly. Why the picture was not more than half done!

III

The picture was nearing completion. A few more days of work, a few more nights of dreams,

and the last touch would be given. Max had become morbidly sensitive as he saw the work developing to the last degree before his eyes. Marta's criticism, spoken by way of comment, affected him for good or evil according to his mood. One day the heart in his breast leaped and bounded because she complimented him on his little work of the afternoon before; again the soul of him became a dead thing, cold, unresponsive, because she doubted the nature of the tint that he had given the cheek of the girl in the doorway. She insisted the touch there should have been of yellow—the mark of the sun's caress. He had suggested a delicate pinkiness. He became silent, morose, nor could she dissipate his melancholy, tender, gentle as she was toward him. For three days he could not work; three nights he tossed on the bed, and she, not far away, heard his coughing through the thin partition and fell asleep with the metallic rasp of it in her ears.

“I shall destroy—good God, why should I work and dream!” Had she not clutched his arm, fearful that he would thrust the slim stem of a brush through the canvas? The impulse fled, leaving him limp and weak, and he sank upon the stool, covering his face with his hands, and his sobs shook his frail frame like an ague.

"Max, Max," she whispered and stroked his tousled hair, as though he were a hot-tempered child. Presently, under the magic of comfort he lifted his face, and smiled up at her. "I wouldn't have done it," he said, with a catch in his breath. "It would have been like killing you."

"Yes, I know," her voice was infinitely tender. But though he assured and reassured her that he would not have destroyed the picture, that he could not, even if she had not been beside him when the passion seized him, she was not certain; and to save him from himself, his enemy, she did not leave him until dusk, nor even then, until she had covered the picture for the night as was her custom.

When she came the next afternoon he was pacing back and forth the length of the room, a brush behind each ear, another between his white teeth. His hair stood out in every direction. Marta went direct to the easel and looked down at the picture. She knew that he had approached noiselessly, and now stood close behind her, so close that she felt his breath among the uncaught hair at her neck.

"Well," he whispered at last, tortured by her silence.

She turned slowly and their eyes met.

"It's right now," was all she said. Light flared

in his dead eyes at her assurance. Realizing as he did her influence, yet when alone at night he had often asked himself why he should ever consider her dictum. What could she know; but now he did not question in the least, her right to criticise. He was glad, glad beyond measure, of her assurance, coming as it had when doubt was his. It was this that his soul hungered for—this sympathy, right or wrong—though he knew it not. So he took her hand and kissed it. A spot of red burned on each cheek.

"Oh, I know!" he cried. "You are right! Marta, you are always right; but"—he passed his pale hand across his white forehead—"I'm so sick—so sick!" The last was uttered as a sob, and he flung himself upon the bed.

Marta was frightened. He had never given way like that before. She saw his breast heave convulsively; his hands were clenched above his head, his deep-set, glowing eyes stared blankly at the ceiling. Then her sudden fright passed away and she went to him and sat beside him. She took one of his hands in hers and chafed it gently.

"Oh, Max, don't, don't give up," she urged quietly. She was sure the outburst was only the result of nervousness; he needed but to be soothed. "I know you're sick, Max," she went on, "but

forget all about it. Work, Max, and you'll forget. Finish the picture. Oh, Max, don't give up. Why, when you see it done, there in front of you, you will be well; and you'll wonder how you ever could have called yourself sick."

He sat up. His eyes were burning.

"I will!" he cried. "God help me, I will—I will!"

The sudden effort hurt him; he coughed and struck his breast smartly with his clenched fist.

This was her hardest day, but when in the evening she heard his soft whistle as she passed his door she knew the mood had slipped from him and she was glad, so glad indeed that later, as she lay gazing at the ceiling from her pillow, tears welled up to her eyes that softened her heart and made infinitely tender the love-smile that hovered about her lips.

IV

Of her hopes and dreams for Max, Marta said nothing to her mother. If she had voiced them—when to share them with another would have made them dearer still—Mrs. Gometsky would not have understood. So she kept silent. Mrs. Gometsky's interest in her lodger was material only. So long as the fifty cents was forthcoming each Monday

she was abundantly satisfied. Indeed if she had any thought at all of Max's welfare, it was that he might do something besides sit before a picture three good hours of the afternoon making here and there little futile dabs with a long-stemmed brush. Not that she was unfriendly. Indeed, one day she expressed to Marta a desire to see the picture, and Marta uncovered it for her.

"Oh, it's fine, ain't it," she said, "fine."

It was the first and last time. But if Marta's interest was deeper than her own, in the work that progressed in the little room up-stairs that Max was wont to call his studio, why not? If something of the significance of her daughter's interest in the vagrant artist or his work was hers to know, she gave no sign whether she was pleased, or otherwise. She remained mutely passive; nor did she question. So Marta hoped and suffered alone, doubting sometimes, silently, that even Max surmised, though she made no effort to close her heart to him. Her love was holy to her. If he saw and understood it could make no difference to her; if he never knew she at least had had the joy of loving him. Nothing could steal that from her; so she was satisfied. Either way he was all in all to her, so what mattered it? If ever she thought that he ought to love her; indeed if ever into her dreams of

him there crept an accounting of what she really was to him, though he knew it not, no doubt she put it away from her as unworthy of her love and of herself. She asked not that she be loved but that the blessed privilege of loving might continue to be hers. That one day, now long ago, the incident figuring to her consciousness like a vague design in the fabric of a dream, he had held her in his frail arms a little moment, and kissed her on the lips and eyes as a spoken lover might have done, did not deceive her. In the satisfaction that was hers, even this action of his she felt she understood. Whenever she dreamed of that afternoon, and awoke to find it but a dream, she felt no sorrow or pain resulting from the realization that he was not there beside her, within reach, so that without awakening him she might kiss him while he slept. In the fullness of her love she experienced pain only when something of his physical suffering was exposed to her.

V

One Saturday night Marta perceived an unusual gayety in Max's manner, and when she spoke of it to him, somewhat fearfully, he went to her and leaning close whispered, "It's a secret."

She was all curiosity at once, but he only shook

his head with playful determination, and bade her wait.

"If I should tell you," he explained, "the effect would all be spoiled. Wait—to-morrow—to-morrow afternoon—Sunday—we'll go and I'll show you."

All the evening his light-heartedness continued. He was more like the old Max. He whistled.

"Oh so fine!" he exclaimed when Marta made a move to go. "So fine!" A little metallic sound issued from his throat. At the door she smiled back at him.

"I can hardly wait," she said.

"You must," he insisted; and when she was gone he laughed aloud. She in her little room across the narrow bare hall heard his laughter and smiled.

At three o'clock the next afternoon they set out together. Thus far Marta's efforts to learn his secret had been in vain. She wore her tan-colored coat, that fitted badly across the shoulders, for when it was new she had been stouter. On her hat was a poor ostrich plume and a bit of color. His hair fell long and quite ragged over the upturned collar of the old brushed-out overcoat, but he did not think of his hair or the coat any more than she did of her poor hat or the thick wrinkles spanning her shoulders. From the streets they traversed, poor

streets for the most part, fringed with little two-story, porchless white houses that were sadly in need of fresh paint, she speculated on their probable goal. In front of every house, it seemed to her, were from two to a dozen children. Passing St. Albertus, the strains of the great organ were borne solemnly out to them, and at a little Hebrew bakery, a block further on, Max stopped. She waited for him outside occupying the moment of his absence in examining the strange things in the window—cakes in odd shapes, tarts of two stories, buns with figures on their glistening, varnished crusts, and discs of bread, stamped with polka dots that looked like the upper crusts of dissipated pies. Max joined her presently with a bag of little anise cakes. They were very good, and the two munched them as they went on. The houses on either side were more imposing now. Mostly they were brick, and some few had iron fences. In the narrow yard of one an iron dog yellow-streaked where the rain had washed away the paint, stood rigidly alert. Away off down the street Marta caught a glimpse of the river, gray and cold, and suddenly the street was cut by a flying trolley car three blocks further on. Marta smiled but said nothing. Presently they turned a corner and crossed the wide avenue.

"Now do you know?" Max exclaimed boisterously.

Marta nodded. "I thought so," she said, and laughed, "the museum."

"Ah, but wait," he cautioned.

They climbed the wide steps and passed into the lobby, where stood the great Chinese carving of "The Wrestler." Up the stairs to the left he led the way and down the main gallery to a curtained arch at the further end. Across the room were a man and a child in front of a huge religious canvas, peopled with long-faced saints and mournful-looking women. At the curtain, Max touched a finger to his lips.

"It's wonderland!" he whispered, and held back the drapery. In the angle, Marta stood motionless and looked about her. The room had been especially constructed to house a private collection of modern works loaned by a manufacturer of soap. Max's discovery of the collection two days before was original although in the papers of that Sunday morning, had they but known it, appeared long accounts of the greater pictures, written for the most part from notes given the various reporters by Paul Giddings, the art director of the museum. The room was deserted now. Behind Marta, breathless almost, stood Max, one pale hand still clutching the portière in the ecstasy of the moment.

"Oh —"

At her deep indrawing of breath he let the curtains fall together behind and took her arm.

"What you think?" he whispered. Some of his great delight was shared by her. On tiptoe they passed around the room, stopping every five steps and withdrawing a short distance to obtain a better view of those pictures that most attracted them. Max's phrases of comment sounded far off in Marta's ears, but what she heard gave her a better understanding, if not a deeper appreciation, of the artists' work.

Halfway around the room she turned quickly to him, and as their eyes met, whispered, exultantly, "Your picture should be here, Max." He gave her arm a little squeeze and smiled.

"Maybe," he said.

"Are these old pictures?" she asked, curiously and doubtfully, for there was, to her, something personal in every one.

"Oh, no!" he answered, "they are all modern; all the artists are alive, I guess. Most of them, anyway."

They sat beside each other on one of the dark red divans that, end to end, stretched the length of the room beneath the narrow skylight. He designated certain features of the pictures within the crescent of their vision and dwelt at length upon the

varying technique, the draftsmanship, the development, until his words became a chaotic jumble of art terms in Marta's mind. It was only the beauty, the uplifting, pulsating beauty, and the truth of the pictures that appealed to her. How this effect was produced, what meant that touch, was nothing to her. It was the whole; the sense of beauty itself, complete, personal; the expression of the artists' souls that spoke to her and that she felt, not in her mind nor yet in her heart, but rather in every fibre of her being. She thrilled with this new ecstasy. The thought, coming to her suddenly, that Max, here beside her, was striving as the painters of these pictures had striven, choked her.

She heard voices beyond the curtain; another instant and she would have flung her arms around Max's neck and sobbed her heart out on his shoulder. The voices sounded nearer, then she heard the rattle of the curtain rings as the portière was drawn aside.

She laid her hand on Max's arm.

"Some one's coming," she whispered.

"Never mind," he answered. "It's public; I just hoped nobody would be here."

She resented this ruthless intrusion. It seemed almost sacrilegious. She did not turn, but withdrew her hand gently from Max's arm. The

visitors were directly behind her, and she heard them quite distinctly.

"Oh, how interesting!" a girl's voice exclaimed.

"Yes; the modern room I call it—the ultra-modern room," a man said.

"Been open long?" again a man's voice but of another quality, rough; vibrant.

"A little while," the former answered—"or, perhaps I should say to-day; I had it in the papers this morning."

The party passed down one side of the room just then, and Marta saw them. Max, with no eyes save for the pictures, was leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, gazing at the canvas which had first attracted him.

A little in advance strode a huge woman with a certain barbaric majesty of bearing. The owner of the coarse voice walked in her wake. When Poynter married his wife he credited himself with his first and last *coup*. From the time when a wise father had bought copper-stocks at the earliest strike in North Michigan, and after ten years had considerably died, leaving "his Nellie," a blessing and four millions, the present Mrs. Poynter had appropriately prospered. Meeting the apt Poynter at a dance—once Mrs. Poynter had danced—Nellie Fitzgibbon met her fate. So did Poynter. It was their

daughter Alice whose voice Marta had first heard as the party entered the gallery. Alice Poynter was not an ordinary girl. In a way she seemed to profit by her mother's deficiencies. She was beautiful, tall, not too slender, the type of beauty that has come to be regarded, rightly or otherwise, peculiar to America.

Just now Alice Poynter was an object of tender—and curious—solicitude, on the part of her friends owing to Paul Giddings' devoted attachment to her. Just how far the affair had progressed no one knew, least of all Mrs. Poynter, who really had the most at stake, for Giddings was popular socially—owing to his art, which was of the fashionable sort—and none realized more keenly than Mrs. Poynter the wisdom of fortification for purposes defensive. So it was quite natural that Giddings, as Director of the Art Museum, on the opening day of the new gallery, should have brought the Poynters over. Ignorant as she was of the real relationship existing between the young people of the party, Marta felt certain that the little man in the frock coat, whose feet she observed to be very small and whose high hat shone lustrously under the skylight, and the corner of whose handkerchief protruded from his shirt cuff, loved the beautiful girl beside him. The discovery amused her and she smiled at their backs;

and the smile was half in pity for the little dapper man, with the sleek hair, gray at the temples, and the tiny feet. That such as he should aspire to such as she! Beside her, tall, straight, broad of shoulders, he looked so miserably puny. She touched Max's arm lightly. He shook off his absorption with a start, and she whispered something that caused him to stare after the party which by now had reached the end of the room where it formed a little group before a picture of a stone church standing on the slope of a vined hillock and defying the blazing sun of a June midday.

The little man was speaking: "I call this picture the Radiator," he said, "because I am quite sure that if the steam supply in my office here should run out I could move my desk down to this end of the gallery and manage to keep quite warm in that sunshine."

Poynter laughed gutturally. Mrs. Poynter articulated "Fancy now!"

The girl exclaimed: "Oh, Paul!"

Marta, hearing the reproof was made certain of the accuracy of her speculation. The little man turned square about, and Max whispered hoarsely:

"Marta; it's Mr. Giddings!"

It was as though he had raised his hand to strike her. She shrank from him; smothering the cry

that rose to her lips. He was not looking at her but at the group in the end of the gallery. The dumb hurt in her eyes faded to wonder, and she leaned towards him, eagerly.

"Not—not the director!" she whispered.

Max nodded. Her breath caught in her throat—a little sob. Then she gazed wonderingly at the man's trim, sleek little figure. He spoke and she heard him quite distinctly:

"Yes, quite the best of his school." His voice was thin, flaccid. "And—Mrs. Poynter, note, please, the canvas on your right; the cleverest of them all, yet the poorest art."

Mrs. Poynter revolved, lifted her lorgnette and said—"James, do see!"

Marta, hearing, seeing, could have cried out, but her voice froze within her. One hand clutched the cushion of the divan. Max's hope, his life, lay in the keeping of that creature. How different from the real had been her conception of him. A great man, old, patriarchal, perhaps, but at least benign, she had pictured him of whom Max had told her so much. And there he stood before her in the flesh—a little, trim, living costume with a shallow face looking out at the top. Could Max not see for himself? Was he crazy? She, then, would resent his judgment on the picture. What could the judg-

ment of such a man be but like himself—small, miserable, insignificant? She was amazed at first, and then the absurdity of it all struck her and she just succeeded, and no more, in smothering the laughter to which the situation gave birth. She glanced at Max, whose presence even she had momentarily forgotten. The party was quite close now—at one side, working by easy stages around the room, and their voices made the only sound in the place. Marta perceived Max's interest, and a feeling of resentment surged over her. He was leaning forward, tense, his face alight, drinking in the words of the little man as they flowed like a tinkling brook.

"He has talent—the talent that a teacher may bring to light in—in almost any one if he but have patience. But genius——" Little Giddings shrugged his narrow, thin shoulders.

"He lacks that something that sorter knocks you between the eyes, eh?" Poynter exploded, and received a horrified glance from his wife.

"Father!" Alice exclaimed.

"An excellent definition of genius—if a bit strenuous," Giddings cooed consolingly. "The quality I should say," he added, "that, expressed in a picture, makes its appeal to the soul."

"There James," murmured Mrs. Poynter, and her

reproving glance at her spouse became a hallowing gleam of benignity as it shifted to Giddings. They had passed the divan, and Marta could no longer see them, though their babble still sounded, incoherent. Max twisted on the seat and stared after them. Marta closed her eyes and her fingers curled tightly in her palms. Her soul cried out, though her lips were dumb. Justice! Justice for Max; she asked only that. And would justice come from such a man? Could it? The hope, the ambition, the very life of Max were in his keeping. It was cruel. She drew her breath between her clenched teeth and all her indomitable spirit returned to her.

She touched Max lightly on the arm.

"Come," she said, "let's go."

"That's him, Marta," he whispered, ecstatically, "that's him."

"Yes, yes, I know." She spoke nervously. "I know; come."

She felt that unless she were to get out of the room she would suffocate. As they passed through the lobby she heard—as one hears voices in a dream—"That's him, Marta; that's him. Marta, do you hear, that's him."

Once in the street, the cold breeze tingling her cheeks, she drank deep draughts of the clear air.

"Are you sick?" Max asked, solicitously, for her paleness was more apparent in the open light.

"No—the room was so hot," she lied; for she was sick; sick at heart. But as they walked on, her calmness came back and with it the tint to her cheeks.

How could she tell Max without shattering the idol he had raised? She felt certain that he would not understand; he might even misjudge her altogether. Why could he not see for himself? But he clattered on, volubly.

"He selected all the pictures there," she half heard him say. "Selected them from—oh, ever so many hundreds; there are none better, for he knows. So he shall decide mine. I shall take it to him soon, now."

"Yes, yes, Max; I know."

That night when she was alone in her small bare room, all the little incidents of the afternoon recurred to her with painful vividness. She saw again, there in the shadow that the bureau made, the trim, slim shape of the little man—his tiny, glistening feet, his narrow, thin shoulders, his lustrous hat. Across the hall was Max, patient, hopeful, certain. She could even hear him. Her dreams for him she knew were his dreams for himself, dreams whose realization, bright, glorious; or

whose dissipation, dreaded, fearful, depended upon the light dictum of the creature that stared at her from out the shadow. What were hearts and hopes to him? And then, of a sudden, the meaning of the revolt dawned upon her. She was afraid. With a sob she slipped to her knees and begged the holy favor of the Image that hung upon the Cross beside her bed.

VI

She must not let him see. The ache in her heart was not for him to know. Of this she was resolved, and conducted herself accordingly. In his presence she was all gaiety and cheerfulness, and in the sunlight of her companionship he worked on. Beneath his hand the picture developed overnight. So far as she could see, it was finished even now. Once she asked him if it were not, whereat he laughed and pinched her firm arm. When she was below stairs, busy at the home tasks, his every footfall overhead smote upon her heart. But he did not know. When he heard her rattling the grate of the stove that heated his poor room by way of the delusive "drum," he smiled at the thought that she had his comfort in mind. Coming upon him quietly one afternoon she saw him standing before the easel. He had produced

the effect he sought in the cotton clouds, their soft, torn edges tinted by the sinking sun.

"It is beautiful," she murmured, and at the sound of her voice he turned quickly.

"Ah," he sighed, relieved. Then he added, musingly: "Another week—maybe less—and it will be done."

His voice had in it a note of melancholy that caused her to ask, "Are you sorry, Max?"

His eyes met hers hesitatingly, doubtfully.

"I don't know—sometimes," he said.

She made no reply and he seated himself on the stool beside her and gazed at the picture.

"Sometimes I'm glad; and sometimes I'm sorry. I love it so, Marta," he muttered. "It has taken my very heart and soul out of me. It *is* me! Sometimes, long after you have gone to sleep, I sit here till the lamp burns out, talking to it. All my secrets it knows; all my hopes; all my fears. You know them too—just us—you and I—and the girl in the picture. Sometimes I ask her questions but she never answers; though sometimes it seems to me she smiles."

He had sat with his forearms on his knees, but now he moved, and looked up. The lamplight falling on his face emphasized its ghastly pallor, and the hard brilliancy of his glowing, sunken eyes.

"When I haven't felt well I've talked to her," he ran on. "Somehow just telling her has seemed to make me feel better; like when I tell you and you give me a lemon to suck. She never gives me a lemon but I seem to feel better for telling her."

The pale ghost of a smile flitted across his face, and on each cheek burned a blot of pink.

As he ceased speaking a spasm of coughing seized him and he stood up, pressing his handkerchief to his mouth. When he removed it, a single stain of crimson showed upon his lip. Marta saw it, and the fear that was always in her heart leaped now into her eyes.

"Max, Max; you're sick!" she cried, and seized his arm as he tottered toward the bed.

"No, no—Marta—not—sick." He staggered, groped, and fell face down on the mattress.

"Lie right there; don't move, Max!" he heard her cry, then her footfalls on the stairs and the slam of the door below—sounds that to him lying prone were like the sounds of a dream, distinct, echoless. Then all was quiet, and he closed his eyes as a delicious drowsiness crept over him.

Then he heard voices. Why should he awake thus in the middle of the night? He clung tenaciously to the fabric of his dream. What a wonderful dream. He had died, and had come back to

earth. He was in a great picture gallery. At one end was an immense throng. In the front rank a little man, his hair gray at the temples, was explaining a picture. Beside him stood a beautiful girl, her eyes alight, her whole face illuminated with the joy that possessed her. He pressed nearer, wormed his way closer and closer until at last the crowd was behind him, and he beheld the picture. It was his own. He opened his eyes then, and looked up into the face of Dr. Polosky.

"You too!" he muttered, and made an effort to rise.

"There, there," he heard the doctor say, "lie still a while, then we'll have your clothes off and get you to bed."

He did not try to get up. Marta turned away and left the room silently. At the head of the stairs she waited. After a long time the little bushy-faced physician appeared.

"Well?"

"S-s-sh, he's asleep. Some one will have to be with him. I left the medicines. They are pellets. The brown ones every hour; the white ones every two hours."

"Is he bad?"

Dr. Polosky shrugged his broad shoulders and held out his hands.

"He'll die?"

The same gesture, and the doctor struck his breast smartly. "It's there," he said.

In the moment's silence that ensued, the outer door below opened and closed, and Marta saw her mother's shadow on the wall.

"I shall sit with him," she said simply, and proceeded down the narrow stairs.

VII

She knew that Max was dying. A week, a day, perhaps an hour; it made no difference. He was dying. She bore the burden of time uncomplainingly. She was numb. At first a nameless dread had seized her; then it passed leaving her heart cold, unfeeling. She had known all along that he must die, she told herself. That the time had come now was but natural. As she moved about the room noiselessly, dry-eyed, calm, the sight of him lying so still in bed, his face as white as the pillow, save for the red blots on his sunken cheeks, did not serve to open the flood-gates of her tears. She spoke low and calmly when there was occasion to speak, and at other times, as when he slept, she sat on the stool at the window, one arm extended along the sill, her eyes fixed unseeing on the street. Even the peevish nagging of her mother failed to excite in her any rise of spirit.

"He should go to the hospital," Mrs. Gometsky repeated, complainingly, over and over. Marta could not reply. Hour after hour she sat voiceless in the poor room where he lay, giving him the medicines, the whiskey, the lemon, half-dried on the little stand, smoothing and turning his pillow; and when the doctor came, would slip unnoticed into the hallway and there await him at the head of the stairs. On a Saturday afternoon Max asked to be allowed to sit up. He had become childlike and meek, and wholly dependent upon Marta, now. She raised his pillow, thrust another beneath it, and drew the stool to the bedside. The day was fading. Already the lights had begun to appear in the street. Suddenly the lamp swinging over the corner sputtered ineffectually, then burned steadily, and the white radiance entered the room, enveloping the figures there. Max reached out a thin hand, and found Marta's, and their fingers locked. She smiled down at him and he smiled back. Neither spoke for a long time.

"I'm going to die," he said, at last. It was as though he were talking to himself. She inclined her head, and he felt her hand-clasp tighten.

"It's not hard to die," he went on, after a moment. "Once, a long time ago—I guess when I was a little boy—I thought how awful it would

be to die. But it isn't. For a year I have known."

Marta looked up. He was smiling.

"Sometimes," he continued, "I have felt as though it must be just then. I've been so close to Death for so long, that we're friends now; and it isn't hard. It's as though I was by a wall. Sometimes when I've been sickest I've jumped up and had a little look at what was on the other side. Just a little look, before I touched ground again. There was always a garden on the other side of the wall, warm and full of sunshine. Flower-beds all laid out regular with walks between 'em, and blossoms everywhere, and birds. Once I saw a bird on a bush that was right by the wall, and I thought I heard it sing; but maybe it didn't really; I only thought it did." He hesitated a moment then went on: "It's because I've known it so long, Marta, that I haven't told you—because I knew it wouldn't do any good."

He read the question in her eyes.

"I love you."

It was only a whisper, but the chords of her heart vibrated.

"You've known it all the time, haven't you?" Her eyes fell and she inclined her head.

"Why," he went on, lightly now. "If I hadn't

known it, I couldn't have painted the picture." Her eyes wandered to the corner where, on its easel, the picture stood half hidden in the shadow.

"We've painted it together, Marta; you and I. You couldn't have done it without me and I couldn't have done it without you. You understand. It's ours; all ours. And when I go, I want you to have it—you; it'll be all yours then."

He spoke calmly of the plans that he had made; how he had saved from the money he had earned as a laborer, until he became too ill to work out of doors; and how he had written a check for all that lay in the bank to his credit. He owed no one, save her mother and the doctor.

"I want you to pay everything, Marta. There'll be enough and more, and with what's left you can buy a frame for the picture."

So it was arranged by him. She had nothing to say. He had planned everything. It was for her merely to carry out his wishes.

In the evening the priest came, and they left him alone with Max. Marta and her mother, waiting in the dining-room, heard the Father's voice and his heavy footfalls overhead. Mrs. Gometsky rocked back and forth in her red-striped chair, placed just without the circle of the light that burned yellow on the table. There were creaking footfalls on the

stairs, and the Father's form loomed big in the doorway against the blackness of the wall behind. Marta glided past him, and he crossed the room and seated himself in her chair. Cautiously she opened the door of Max's room. At the head of the bed, candles burned steadily. With nerveless fingers she drew away the sheet, and, stooping, kissed his forehead, then went silently out of the room and closed the door.

VIII

Yes, Mr. Giddings was there and would see her, the boy said. Would she have a chair in the waiting-room? Very well, he would tell the director; just now he was engaged, but would be at leisure in a few moments.

So she followed the boy into the waiting-room and seated herself on an old English chair between the two high windows. The afternoon sun, shining through the stained glass, filled the room with a soft, golden glow. The atmosphere itself, seemed colourous. Marta felt a little oppressed by it; as though a quality of heaviness prevented her breathing easily.

The walls of the room—dark-red with panels of tapestry—were sparsely decorated, and what pictures there were did not interest her. They had been selected wholly for the room, and against the

red background, luminous in the yellow light, they seemed false. Marta let her hand fall to the edge of the stretcher beside her chair. She had covered it with newspapers which were secured by many bits of knotted string.

Would he never come? The boy had said, "in a moment." It had been half an hour, at least. She was inclined to seek the boy; certain that there had been a mistake. But she decided to wait fifteen minutes longer. She could see the face of the old Dutch clock through the doorway, and every now and then she glanced up at it impatiently.

Perhaps the director's decision would be favorable, after all. She tried to assure herself that it would. Max had worked so hard, so patiently. And he had painted a great picture. That she knew. At times, like a wave, a feeling passed over her, that her fears had been unwarranted; that the director would wax enthusiastic over Max's work and take it and hang it in the new gallery where she and Max had planned it should be hung, the greatest picture of them all; the one pointed out to visitors as the best. At such times she had calculated the size of the group that would linger in front of it and make inquiries concerning the artist. And Max would know, too. Had he not said to her, as he lay dying:

"Whatever becomes of it, I shall know."

She had promised him that she would take it to the museum, and, glad in his confidence that he had wrought well, he died happy, and smiling in the way she loved to see him smile. At the tender recollection, she too smiled now, and her fingers closed over the edge of the picture leaning against her knees.

The door at the end of the room opened, and the director stood on the threshold, looking at her. At sight of him the pale smile fled from her face, and her heart again became like lead in her bosom.

"You wished to see me?"

It was the voice that she had heard once before—with Max in the new gallery; and, like a flash, all the little details of their visit reappeared to her.

"Won't you come into my private office?" he said. She passed in front of him—walking as one asleep—and heard the door close. He indicated the chair at the end of his desk, and she sank upon it. As she fumbled the strings that secured the papers, he leaned forward.

"Let me," he said; and when he had the wrapping undone—

"Ah, a picture!" he exclaimed.

She detected a note in his little cry that gave her a great hope; and her heart leaped. She sat tense,

on the edge of the chair, her lips slightly parted; her white teeth glistening behind them.

"Yes," she said, "a—a friend of mine asked me to show it to you."

The director held the picture as far in front of him as he could reach. With his head cocked a little to one side he examined the work curiously. Then he slanted it against the wall at the back of the desk.

Marta, tortured, waited.

At last he turned to her. His eyes were kindly and his voice was soft and low.

"Tell me about your friend," he said.

Should she? she asked herself. Would he understand? Would Max have told if he were there? Something in the voice of the little man in the velvet coat, sitting at the desk, reassured her. At best, it was not a long story, and she was brief.

When she was done, she sat back in the chair and waited. While she talked his eyes were fixed on the picture, but now he turned to her.

"Why didn't he come to me at first?" he said. She did not reply. It was as though he spoke to himself, she thought.

"He should have come," he went on. "There is talent here—talent, misdirected. The picture has some merit as it is; it might have much more. You understand?"

She inclined her head.

"I am very sorry."

He began to smooth out the newspapers on the top of the desk.

"It lacks the one quality," he said, as he folded the papers over and slipped the string beneath.

"It lacks the one quality that to be really good it should possess. It isn't genius exactly, that I mean; but—it's called by different names—atmosphere—the artist's personality." As he tied the string securely, her eyes followed his slim fingers with a strange fascination.

"He painted it out of himself—your friend—some great pictures have been produced that way—but not many. The thing itself should really exist first, you know ——"

Oh! What was he saying? What was he going to say; what was he trying to say; and what mattered it? Her heart cried out but her lips remained silent. He held the picture out to her.

"—— And then, in painting, the artist must put himself into it, of course. By just so much as the artist puts himself into a picture, in that degree does his work have soul." He was sure she understood. He stood up, and she followed his movement quite involuntarily.

"I am sorry ——"

He opened the door for her and she passed out. It was not until she found herself in the street that the daze left her. She walked swiftly. Her mother was not in the house when she entered and she was glad. At the open door of the room that had been Max's she stood an instant, and looked about.

How cold and bare it was! She laid the picture on the bed—his bed—and began to untie the strings. When she had the papers off, she carried the picture to his easel and stood it there, then, gathering up the papers and string from the bed she crushed them in her hands and went down-stairs.

IX

The Mass had cost thirty-five dollars and there was not much remaining of the money Max had given her. With a part of what was left Marta bought a frame for the picture and hung it in the dining-room. Whenever Mrs. Gometsky lifts her eyes from her plate they encounter it. To her it is the picture of a girl standing in the doorway of what appears to be an old house, and gazing across the fields. The last light of the sinking sun tints the torn edges of the lazy cotton clouds that fill the sky, and some of the golden light lingers on the girl's cheek.

But Marta knows the picture by its name.

